

HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSE



EL. CALVERT & CO.
Author of "Wee Ann"

HUMPTY-DUMPTY HOUSE

By Ethel Calvert Phillips

To get to Humpty-Dumpty House you go down Humpty-Dumpty Road, which is all ditches and thank-you-marms and mudholes, and so deserves the name which little Janet gives it. Far out in the country, at the Humpty-Dumpty House, lives great-uncle John Thorne.

When Janet's father goes off exploring, the little girl and her mother come to live in this most fascinating old house. This undoubtedly is one of the best stories which the author of "Wee Ann," "Christmas Light," etc., has written. The little girl does the most natural and yet unusual things, and the story is never stiff or mawkish, but always bubbles with life and good spirits.



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HOUSE

...BY...
ETHEL CALVERT PHILLIPS ...

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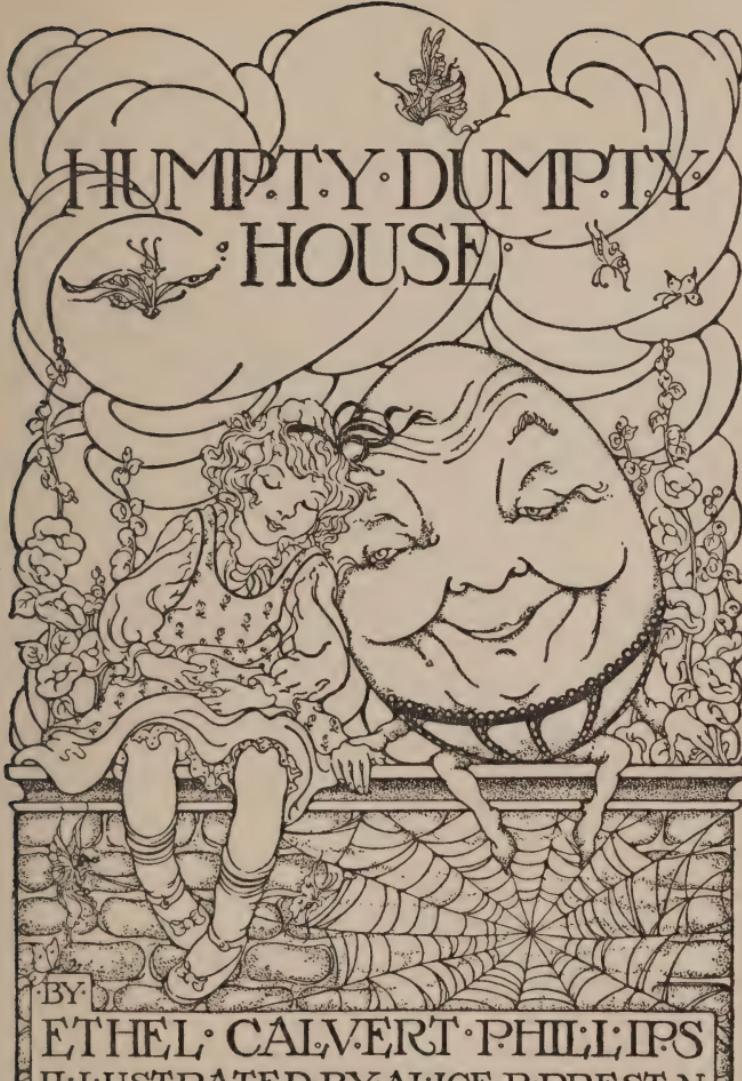


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HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSE



“DON’T WRIGGLE SO, PIXIE,” SAID JANEY, TRYING TO TUCK
THE CAP STRINGS UNDER THE BLANKET (page 84)



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BY

ETHEL CALVERT PHILLIPS
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HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSE

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CHAPTER I

JANEY

THERE was once a little girl who was the dearest little girl in all the world. At least that is what her father and her mother thought, and her baby brother Jack — though he never said so — and her Uncle John Thorn, and her Aunt Ellen Prince, and, oh, ever so many other people, more than I could count. And perhaps, if you had known her, you would have thought so, too.

Her name was Janey Thorn, and she lived in the city, in a little red brick house, with Father and Mother and Baby Jack, who was only six months old, but who could creep almost as fast as Janey could run.

Janey was a plump little girl, with sea-blue eyes, and a shock of soft, light hair that stood

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out round her head like so much thistledown. She had a round, rosy face, a round little nose well sprinkled with freckles, and a dimple in the middle of her round little chin. She was just as tall as the bedpost on the big bed in Mother's room, not too tall and not too short, a very good height, indeed.

And how old was Janey?

Ah, that is something that she herself would have been eager to tell you. For not long ago Janey had had a birthday, a birthday that, overnight, had turned her from four into five years old. And five-years-old is quite an age, as Father truly said.

There had been a cake with five candles on it, and presents, just like Christmas. A gold locket on a chain, a shiny silver tea-set, and a doll who was so very beautiful that Janey called her "the Princess," out of a story in one of her fairy-books, and meant to wait until Father came home again before deciding upon any other name.

For Father had gone away upon a long, long journey, that would take him up into the frozen North, where snow covered the ground for miles and miles and the very houses that people lived in were made of ice.

“Will you see Santa Claus?” Janey had asked.

Father hadn’t been sure, but he promised to send Santa Claus word how good Janey and Jacky were, if he possibly could.

“Perhaps you will bring me a baby white bear,” Janey had suggested. “And Jacky would like one of Santa Claus’s reindeer, I know. We could harness him to the baby carriage and Jacky could drive. Then Mother wouldn’t have to push at all.”

Father thought this a good idea, but was afraid Santa Claus could not spare one of his reindeer.

“But I will bring you each a present that you will like,” he had said. And Janey was sure that he would.

So Father had gone, with his trunk packed full of the warmest clothes he could buy, and with strange furry garments, the like of which Janey had never seen before.

And now, one morning, Janey sat out on the front steps waiting for the postman, who, she hoped, would bring a letter from Father. Close beside her stood Elly, the gray flannel elephant, her playmate and her friend.

Elly wore a gay red blanket. His cheeks were very plump, for Mother had made him long ago when Janey had been ill with mumps, and Elly had been obliged to have mumps, too, at Janey's special request. Elly's shoe-button eyes sparkled with mischief, and his large gray ears, that listened to so many of Janey's secrets, flopped in a most sociable way. What did it matter if his legs were a trifle wobbly and that Jacky had chewed off the end of his tail? Janey loved him and took great comfort with him, more than with the beautiful "Princess," if the truth were told.

Far up the street there sounded the postman's whistle, and Janey sprang to her feet and peered over the iron railing.

"There he is, Elly!" exclaimed Janey. "There is Mr. Banta!"

And with Elly tucked under her arm, Janey ran to meet him.

Mr. Banta and Janey had grown to be good friends, especially since Father had gone away. For Janey had told of the trip into the snow country, and of the letters that at first would come often, and that after a while would come very seldom, indeed, because Father would be so near the lonely North Pole that there would be no postman to carry his letters for him. And Mr. Banta, in turn, had told of his little boy Joey, who, some day, meant to be a sailor and to travel all over the world in a great white ship.

This morning, when Mr. Banta saw Janey, he patted his bag and held up one finger. Janey knew that meant he had one letter for her today.

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“Do you think it is a letter from Father, Mr. Banta?” asked Janey, falling in beside the tall postman and trotting along to keep up with his quick steps. “Is the writing very small and black and jiggly? If it is, it is Father’s letter, I am sure.”

Mr. Banta pursed up his lips and shook his head.

“Of course I can’t tell for certain,” said he, “but I shouldn’t say the writing on this letter was small nor black nor jiggly. But this I know. It is one of the funniest letters that I have ever carried in my bag.”

Mr. Banta smiled down into Janey’s disappointed face.

“Funny?” Janey cheered up a trifle. “Is it pictures? Let me see. Why, I don’t think it is funny at all.”

Janey stared blankly at the large white envelope that Mr. Banta held before her.

“Look at this!” Mr. Banta turned the envelope over and pointed to the small black let-

ters printed on the flap. "This is what makes it a funny letter. Shall I tell you what it says? 'Humpty Dumpty House on Humpty Dumpty Road.' Did you ever hear of anything like that before? Why, I suppose it is where Mother Goose lives."

And tall Mr. Banta and short little Janey laughed merrily together at the thought.

"You never told me Mother Goose was a friend of yours," said Mr. Banta when he could speak.

Janey, her cheeks very pink, laughed again and shook her head.

"It isn't from Mother Goose," she assured Mr. Banta. "I don't know her at all except in the picture-book. It must be from my Uncle John in the country. He lives on Humpty Dumpty Road. The road is full of humps and bumps. That is why they call it so. But I never heard of Humpty Dumpty House before."

"Perhaps your mother will know," answered Mr. Banta, giving Janey the letter.

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“But I believe Mother Goose has something to do with it,” he called after her as she hurried into the house.

Outside the door of her mother’s room Janey paused.

“Mother,” said she in a loud whisper, for Jacky lay asleep in his crib — “Mother, here is a letter. It isn’t from Father. Mr. Banta thinks it is from Mother Goose, but I think it is from Uncle John in the country. Mother, what is Humpty Dumpty House? Do you know?”

The letter was from Uncle John Thorn — Father’s Uncle John, to be exact. And when Mother had read it and told Janey the news it held, Janey jumped for joy straight up and down for almost a minute without speaking a word.

Jacky opened his blue eyes and sat bolt upright in his crib. He must have thought Janey was jumping to amuse him, for he clapped his fat hands and opened his mouth in a wide toothless smile.

“Jacky,” cried Janey, running over to the crib and helping unsteady Jacky to his feet, “we are going to Uncle John’s to stay all summer. He wants us. He says so. Perhaps we will stay until Father comes home. And every one in the country, Jacky, will say that you are the best baby they ever knew, because you never cry unless you just can’t help it.”

Janey hugged the squirming Jacky close.

Then she asked, “Has Uncle John ever seen Jacky, Mother?”

“No,” answered Mother, “but Aunt Ellen has.”

Aunt Ellen Prince was Mother’s aunt, and she lived only a short distance from Uncle John Thorn in the little country village of Hebron, where Mother and Father had lived, too, long ago when they were a little boy and girl.

“Mother,” said Janey suddenly, letting Jacky sit down with a thud, “what is Humpty Dumpty House? Did you ever hear of it before?”

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Mother shook her head.

“Uncle John has always lived on Humpty Dumpty Road,” she answered. “But I don’t know, any more than you do, what Humpty Dumpty House means.”

“I must tell Mr. Banta about the letter,” said Janey thoughtfully. “He will want to know, won’t he? I must tell him that it is from Uncle John and not from Mother Goose.”

So when Mr. Banta came by on his afternoon round, there sat Janey again on the steps.

“The letter was from Uncle John,” she told him, hopping at his side. “We are to go and stay all summer. And when I find out about Humpty Dumpty House, I will let you know. Mother said I might,” she finished with a nod of her head.

Mr. Banta seemed pleased. He smiled all over his face, and when they parted at the corner he made Janey laugh out loud.

“Be sure you give my love to Mother Goose if you meet her at Humpty Dumpty House,” said Mr. Banta.

And Janey, though she more than half-suspected that it was all a joke, promised that she would.

CHAPTER II

HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSE

THE long train ride was almost at an end.

Mother had given Janey a last drink of water. She had tied on Jacky's cap and buttoned his little white coat. The big black traveling-bag had been snapped shut. The conductor had called out, "Hebron! He—bron!" Then the train, with a grinding of wheels and a screaming of the brake, slid into the station and finally stood still with a shudder that almost jolted Janey off her feet.

The journey to the country was over.

On the platform stood Uncle John, looking carefully along the windows of the car.

"Here I am!" called Janey, waving both her hands. "Here I am! Mother and Jacky and me!"

And the next moment Janey found herself on the platform, held tight in Uncle John's arms, with Mother and Jacky at her side.

Janey squeezed Uncle John until his face grew quite red. She had forgotten how much she loved him until she saw his merry blue eyes, so like Baby Jack's, his soft white hair that stood out round his head somewhat as hers did, and his smile that "made his cheeks smile, too," thought Janey to herself.

Uncle John stowed Mother and Jacky and the bags in the back seat of the automobile, but Janey rode in front beside him, sitting up very straight and looking eagerly about her from side to side as the car rolled along.

How pleasant it was in the country, thought Janey, so much more sky than in the city, and the sun going down in a blaze of scarlet and gold as it never did at home. Janey wrinkled her small nose as she sniffed the sweet country air.

There were so many interesting things to see, too.

Here was a pasture, so Uncle John said it was called, and in the pasture a little brown colt running merrily along at his mother's side. The

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big horse halted for a moment, and proudly arched her neck and pawed the thick green grass. Then she kicked up her heels and was off again, the little colt gayly following every move.

There was a great red barn, its double doors open wide. Jogging slowly along the path to the barn went a line of cows, and at their heels a little barefoot boy, who kept the stray bossies in place by shouting, and running to and fro, and snapping a switch that was quite as long as he was tall.

By the roadside, among the grasses and brambles, grew bright-colored flowers, and Mother pointed them out to Janey and called them each by name. Sturdy black-eyed Susan, delicate Queen Anne's lace, gay butter-and-eggs, nodding daisies, a whole field full. Janey planned to come to-morrow and pick as many blossoms as her arms could hold.

All about her, among the trees, she could hear the soft chirping of birds.

“Saying good-night,” said Uncle John, “before they go to sleep in their nests.”

Now Uncle John drove up to a low white house.

“This is where Aunt Ellen lives. Do you remember, Janey?” asked Mother, leaning forward and waving Jacky’s plump hand.

The front door flew open, and down the path came Aunt Ellen to hug Mother and Jacky and Janey close.

Of course Janey remembered Aunt Ellen. She remembered Aunt Ellen’s watch, too, with a picture on the face, and wished that she might ask to see it now. She remembered Molasses, the big yellow dog, as lazy as a dog could be, who now sauntered leisurely down to the gate and gazed at them with sleepy eyes and slowly wagging tail.

There, peeping from the kitchen window, was Maria, who made such good gingerbread. Janey blew her a little kiss as the car backed and started, and was answered by a violent flapping of Maria’s white apron.

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“Uncle John” — began Janey, as the car turned into Humpty Dumpty Road. Any one would have known, without telling, that it was Humpty Dumpty Road by the many bumps and jolts and “thank-you-mums,” that nearly shook you from your seat — “Uncle John, what is Humpty Dumpty House?”

“My house,” answered Uncle John promptly, with his eye on the rough road ahead.

“Why do you call it Humpty Dumpty House?” asked Janey next.

But before Uncle John could answer, Janey bounced up in the air like a rubber ball and came down with a thump as the car rattled over an especially big bump.

“Are you there?” asked Uncle John, looking comically down at Janey over his shoulder.

“Yes,” answered Janey, a little out of breath, settling her hat, and glad that she had felt Mother’s hand on her shoulder as she flew up in the air. “I am here. But, Uncle John, I want to know about Humpty Dumpty House.

Mother says it is because it is on Humpty Dumpty Road."

"A better reason than that," said Uncle John proudly. "Just you wait and see. This is the beginning of my brick wall. Now keep your eyes open."

Janey did as she was bid, and presently she opened her eyes as wide as ever she could.

"Look!" cried Janey. "Look at Humpty Dumpty!"

For, whether you believe it or not, there sat Humpty Dumpty on the end of Uncle John's brick wall.

"Let me see him," begged Janey, scrambling up on the seat. "Let me see Humpty Dumpty."

So Uncle John obligingly stopped the car and let Janey take a long, long look.

Yes, there sat Humpty Dumpty perched upon the wall beside the gate, and looking as much at home as if he had sat there all his days.

His head and body were a huge glass egg, set in a narrow iron frame, and the egg stood quite

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as high as Janey herself. A neat little pair of black iron legs hung down over the wall, upon which he supported himself with an equally neat little pair of black iron arms. Two black eyes, a nose and a mouth had Humpty Dumpty, and there he sat looking out upon the road, the drollest figure Janey had ever seen in all her short life.

“But that isn’t the best of him,” said Uncle John, enjoying Janey’s look of amazement.

And leaning forward he called, “Hello the house! Hello the house!”

In a moment out upon the porch appeared Lucretia, the colored woman from the West Indies who kept house for Uncle John, and who had lived with him for many, many years.

“Light up, Lucretia,” called Uncle John.

And a second later, Humpty Dumpty was glowing with a clear golden light that shone out brightly across the darkening road.

“How is that for a gate-lamp?” asked Uncle John with a chuckle.

But Janey didn't answer. She was staring at Humpty Dumpty, her hands clasped tightly together.

It was almost as if the moon had come down from the sky and had seated himself upon Uncle John's wall for a little rest.

Drowsy Jack sat up and held out his chubby arms as if he would take Humpty Dumpty straight into them. Mother, laughing, asked Uncle John how-ever he came to think of such a thing. But Janey sat quite still, looking and looking at Humpty Dumpty.

Why, it might easily be as Mr. Banta had said — that Mother Goose did have something to do with Humpty Dumpty House. Anything pleasant might happen here. And Janey breathed a long sigh of happiness as Uncle John drove up to the house, leaving Humpty Dumpty to shine alone upon the wall under the swaying branches of the oak tree that spread above his head.

Lucretia met them at the door, bowing and

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smiling and showing a dazzling row of white teeth. She wore a gay red and white plaid dress that contrasted finely with her dark, coffee-colored skin, a stiffly starched white apron, and a wide snowy kerchief.

Lucretia had known Janey's mother when she was a little girl, and to Janey's great surprise she now called her "Miss Mary," instead of "Mrs. Thorn" or "Mother," which were her usual names, Janey knew.

"Popovers are done to a turn, Miss Mary," said Lucretia, with a nod of her head that made the heavy gold hoops in her ears swing to and fro.

The mention of popovers made Janey remember how hungry she was.

She was sleepy, too, she found at supper as her head nodded and nodded over her plate.

But just as Janey was climbing into bed that night, she slipped down to the floor again and trotted out into the hall.

"Janey Thorn, where are you going?" asked

Mother, who was pinning restless Jacky's blankets into place.

"I won't be a minute, Mother," answered Janey, holding up her long nightgown with both hands.

Straight down the hall she went and peeped out of the window.

There on the wall sat faithful Humpty Dumpty, shining brightly amid the darkness all about him.

"I only wanted to say good-night to you," called Janey softly. "Good-night, Humpty Dumpty, good-night."

CHAPTER III

WHO ATE THE CURLY COOKY

THE next morning Janey ran out into the kitchen to pay Lucretia a visit, and the first question she asked was:

“Lucretia, where is Pierre?”

“So you remember my Pierre?” said Lucretia, showing all her white teeth in a smile.

She led the way to the back porch where, hanging high in a large golden cage, there swung a scarlet and green parrot. At sight of Lucretia he tumbled from his perch and thrust his beak out between the bars.

“My little one would kiss me,” explained Lucretia.

And, holding out her finger, she allowed the parrot to bite gently upon it, as he turned his head from side to side and rolled his black eye up at Lucretia with a knowing air.

Pierre was Lucretia’s special pet. She had brought him with her from the West Indies, and

she treated him almost as if he were a little boy.

“Lift me up, Lucretia,” begged Janey, on tiptoe. “Lift me up and let Pierre kiss me, too.”

“We will talk to him first,” said Lucretia, picking Janey up in her arms. “You remember Pierre comes from the West Indies and so likes best to speak French. Say, ‘Bonjour, Pierre.’”

“Bonjour, Pierre,” repeated Janey. “Bonjour.”

At this Pierre promptly opened his beak and, to Janey’s great delight, hoarsely croaked:

“Bonjour, mon petit chou, bonjour.”

“What does he say, Lucretia?” asked Janey, excitedly patting Lucretia’s broad back. “Tell me what he says.”

“He says ‘good-morning, my little cabbage,’ ” answered Lucretia with a smile. “That is a pet name Pierre gives only to his friends.”

“A cabbage!” Janey opened her eyes very wide. “He called me a little cabbage! Isn’t he funny?” And Janey laughed outright at

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Pierre's droll pet name. "Tell me something else, please, to say to him, Lucretia. I like to talk French."

"Say how do you do," directed Lucretia.
"Comment vous portez-vous, Pierre?"

In answer to Janey's question Pierre politely responded,

"Très bien, très bien, merci."
"He is very well, thank you," Lucretia told Janey.

Then she set Janey down on the floor.
"To-day is baking day," said Lucretia briskly, "and time will not stand still for me. Adieu, Pierre, adieu."

Janey lingered a moment to wave good-bye to Pierre, and then followed Lucretia into the kitchen. Baking day was always pleasant, she knew. Sometimes there were bowls to scrape or crumbs to eat. She drew up a chair to the kitchen table and, kneeling upon it, watched Lucretia set out bowls and pans and rolling-pin and cake-board.

“Is it a cake, Lucretia?” asked Janey, sniffing at the spice-box.

“Cookies,” answered Lucretia, as she brought from the closet a yellow bowl filled with dried currants. “Mr. John likes them best.”

“So do I,” said Janey happily. “Cookies are my favorite, too.”

She watched Lucretia mix and roll and cut the cookies. But once they were safely in the pans and the oven door shut upon them, Janey thought she would run down and see how Humpty Dumpty had spent the night.

“But I will be back, Lucretia,” said Janey. “I will be back before the cookies are baked. I promise.”

Humpty Dumpty seemed in the best of spirits this morning. As Janey stood gazing curiously up at him, the flickering sunshine made a smile come and go across his broad, merry face, and a more contented, jaunty little figure would have been hard to find anywhere.

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“I do hope he won’t fall off the wall like Humpty Dumpty in Mother Goose,” thought tender-hearted Janey. “I wonder if he is ever tired sitting still so long. And lonely, too. But perhaps the fairies come out at night and play with him.”

As you see, Janey was a little girl who believed in fairies. She thought that her dolls and her toys, Elly, for instance, had feelings just like her own. As for Humpty Dumpty, he seemed almost alive, except that he didn’t move about or talk.

But who knew what Humpty Dumpty did at night when there was no one by to see? Nobody, nowadays, had ever seen a fairy, so far as Janey knew, and yet there were fairies. No doubt about that. Perhaps Humpty Dumpty, when every one was snug in bed, came down off the wall to stretch himself, and, it might be, to play with the fairies themselves and have a merry time.

“Do you, Humpty Dumpty?” asked Janey

earnestly, looking up into his face. "Do you come down off the wall at night to play?"

It may have been only a stray shadow from the leaves overhead, but Janey certainly thought she saw Humpty Dumpty nod his head "Yes."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Janey. "I knew it! But I won't tell, except perhaps Mother. I tell her everything. You won't mind Mother knowing, will you? I must go now," she went on, "because Lucretia is baking cookies. But I will come back soon, Humpty Dumpty, I will."

The cookies were well out of the oven when Janey reached the house. They lay on a great platter, crisp and brown, and smelling of nutmeg, and cinnamon, and a dash of molasses, too.

"You may choose two of them to eat now," said Lucretia, who was slicing apples into a deep dish.

Janey walked round and round the table before she could decide which was the largest cooky on the plate. Of course she chose that

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one, once she had made up her mind. And next she chose a cooky that curled up at each end, in the prettiest way, somewhat like a seashell.

"I do like this curly cooky," said Janey, and sat down out on the back porch to eat her little feast.

Janey bit into the largest cooky. Oh, how good it was! No wonder Lucretia's cookies were Uncle John's favorite cake. Janey ate slowly. She wanted to make the cookies last as long as she could.

But soon the largest one was eaten, every crumb. Janey looked fondly at the curly cooky. She turned it over and over. She didn't know which end she wanted to bite off first.

Suddenly Janey put the cooky down again.

"Humpty Dumpty!" exclaimed she aloud.
"He would like this cooky, I know."

Over her head, Pierre in his cage tried the new word.

"'Umpty Dump!'" croaked Pierre softly.
"Umpty Dump!"

Without losing a moment Janey ran down the path to the gate, and, climbing upon a stone that might have been put there for her to step upon, she laid the cooky on the wall, close to Humpty Dumpty's tiny right hand.

"Eat it," whispered Janey. "It's good."

And then, lest Humpty Dumpty should be shy about eating it before her, she ran away as fast as ever she could.

It was a long while after that Janey remembered to go and see whether Humpty Dumpty had eaten his cooky or no. It was late in the afternoon, and Uncle John and Mother, with Jacky in his carriage, were out upon the porch.

Down at the gate, Janey peered up at the wall. She couldn't see Humpty Dumpty's cooky. She climbed upon the stone — and the wall was as bare as if no cooky had ever been placed upon it! There was not even a crumb to be seen. Truly, if Humpty Dumpty had eaten the cooky, he was a very tidy boy.

Janey flew back to the porch.

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“Humpty Dumpty has eaten my cooky!” she called. “Humpty Dumpty has eaten my cooky!”

Mother and Uncle John couldn’t understand what she meant until she had told them all about the curly cooky.

Then, because Janey begged so hard, they walked down to the gate to see the bare wall for themselves.

As they stood there, wondering where the cooky had gone, along the road came Aunt Ellen to call.

“What do you think became of the curly cooky?” Mother asked Aunt Ellen, when she had been told the story.

“I think the robins who live in this tree took it to feed their family,” said Aunt Ellen, pointing out to Janey a nest high overhead. Janey thought she could see three little heads peeping over the edge of the nest, but she was not sure. “I believe your curly cooky is up there in that nest.”

"I think a little boy took it," said Mother; "perhaps that little barefoot boy we saw yesterday driving cows. Perhaps he came by and saw the cooky and ate it up. He may have thought it had been left there for him."

Out of the bushes on the other side of the road sauntered Aunt Ellen's dog, Molasses. He wagged his tail to every one, and then lay down in the dust at his mistress's feet.

"He has been gone all afternoon," said Aunt Ellen. "How did you know I was here, Molasses?"

But Molasses didn't answer. He closed his eyes and lazily beat his tail up and down.

Uncle John stood watching the big yellow dog as he lay in the road. Was that a brown crumb clinging to Molasses' mouth?

Janey looked questioningly up at Uncle John as, holding his hand, they started up the path.

"Perhaps Molasses knows something about your cooky," suggested Uncle John.

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But Janey, after thinking this over, slowly shook her head.

"I think Humpty Dumpty ate it," said Janey. "I am almost sure he did. I am going to see what Lucretia and Pierre think, too."

Before Janey reached the kitchen, she stopped on the porch to question Pierre, and that wise little bird settled the question, for Janey, at least, once for all.

"Pierre, who ate the curly cooky?" asked Janey.

And Pierre, peering through his bars, answered,

"'Umpty Dump! 'Umpty Dump!'"

CHAPTER IV

FAMILY CARES

AUNT ELLEN had invited Mother and Janey and Jacky to spend the day with her.

Janey liked to play in Aunt Ellen's cool, dim parlor, while Mother and Aunt Ellen talked at one end of the room, and Jacky tumbled about on a quilt at their feet. To-day he was amusing himself with his latest plaything, given him by Uncle John — a huge duck that would really float on the water and yet that could waddle naturally about on dry land as well.

In a low cupboard, where Aunt Ellen had told her she might play, Janey found a half-dozen large pink-and-white seashells. Janey thought them pretty, and quite as pleasant to play with as any new toy. First they were her children, whom she put snugly to bed in a row under the sofa. Next she opened a school, and in a brisk manner taught the seashells to spell "cat" and "rat," and to recite "Twinkle, twin-

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kle, little star," which Janey had learned for Father just before he had gone on his journey into the North.

"And though Father is so far away," Janey informed the seashells, "at night we both see the very same stars. That is true, because Father told me so."

Lying upon her back on the floor, Janey allowed the seashells, pressed close against her ear, to sing their murmuring song of the ocean waves. But after a moment or two, finding herself almost asleep, she jumped up and ran out into the garden, to play among the flowers until Aunt Ellen called her in to luncheon.

Aunt Ellen's garden was neat and trim and sweet, just like Aunt Ellen herself. Janey wouldn't have picked one of the flowers for the world, unless she had been told she might.

After luncheon Janey sidled up to Aunt Ellen and whispered in her ear.

"My watch?" said Aunt Ellen. "May you see it? Why, of course you may."

Aunt Ellen took from her bureau drawer a large, old-fashioned gold watch. She snapped open the case and held it low so that Janey might look inside. On the face of the watch was a picture, all in black and gold, a picture of a tiny house, with a front path, and trees growing all about it. Janey did not doubt that this was Aunt Ellen's house — the very one she lived in now — and she only wished that the picture showed Aunt Ellen looking from one of the windows or walking down the front path.

She was still gazing at the picture when she heard Aunt Ellen say something to Mother that made her prick up her ears and listen with all her might.

"Have you forgotten, Mary," said Aunt Ellen, "that I have something of yours up in the garret that this little girl might like?"

Mother looked puzzled.

"I don't remember anything," said she.

And then suddenly Mother began to smile.

"Not my basket?" said Mother in a surprised

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voice. "You don't mean to tell me that you have kept my basket all these years?"

"Indeed I have," replied Aunt Ellen, "and taken good care of it, too. Now you and Janey go straight up to the garret, if you like, and I will stay here with the baby. Those garret stairs are bad for my knee."

"Come, Janey," said Mother, still smiling, "I am going to show you something the like of which you have never seen before."

Janey was quite ready to follow Mother up the steep garret stairs.

Under the eaves there stood a wicker clothes-basket, the top neatly covered over with a piece of blue-and-white gingham.

"There it is!" cried Mother, her cheeks as pink as Janey's. "There is my basket that I had when I was a little girl."

"What is in it, Mother?" asked Janey, excitedly hopping from one foot to the other. "What is in the basket? Show me, do."

Mother pulled the basket into the middle

of the floor. She untied the cord that fastened the gingham covering in place. And there before them stood the basket filled to the brim with dolls! Yes, filled to the very brim with dolls!

“Mother!” gasped Janey. “Mother!”

And that was all she could say.

Mother was on her knees beside the basket. Dolly by dolly she lifted them out, handling each one as tenderly as if it were Jacky or Janey herself.

“This is Josie Anna,” said Mother, picking up a big, floppy rag doll, almost as tall as Janey. “Aunt Ellen made her for me when I was only four years old. I think I loved her the best of all my dollies. She is so pleasant to sleep with, Janey. She doesn’t hurt you, no matter how much you roll on her in the night.” And Mother placed Josie Anna in Janey’s outstretched hands.

“This is little Sadie,” went on Mother. “Oh, how I did enjoy making clothes for Sadie! I

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must have made the little pink dress she is wearing now."

Sadie was a small china doll, with a pretty, plump face and long flaxen braids. Janey opened her arms to take Sadie in, too, though Josie Anna alone was quite an armful.

"Here is Helen. She is a French doll," said Mother, lifting out a dolly with big brown eyes and long golden curls. "And this is Dorothy, my baby doll. And here is little black Solly riding on an elephant. The elephant will be company for your Elly, won't he? Solly was the traveler of my family. Uncle John brought him to me from London, when I was six years old. Suppose we take the basket downstairs, Janey. Aunt Ellen may like to see the dollies, too."

"Will the dollies go home with me?" asked Janey, stepping carefully down the stairs with two babies tucked under each arm.

"Certainly," answered Mother. "You will have to take charge of them now. Aunt Ellen and I have each had our turn."

Downstairs, in Aunt Ellen's bedroom, Janey arranged the dolls in a row against the wall. It was a long row. It stretched from the bureau to the bed, and from the bed to the sewing-table. But, though there were so many, Mother could name the dolls, every one.

There were dollies large and small, there were dollies pretty and plain. Some had rosy cheeks and golden curls; others had lost an arm or an eye; while one poor little boy doll, named Willy, was battered and scarred from top to toe, and hadn't a single spear of hair left on his head.

"I always seemed to be carrying Willy whenever I fell downstairs," said Mother. "But I did love him dearly. I think I love them all to this day. How good you were, Aunt Ellen, to keep my dollies all these years!"

"I was keeping them for Janey," replied Aunt Ellen, with a smile for Janey who was sitting on the floor surrounded by this new family that had been so suddenly placed in her care.

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It was quite a task becoming acquainted with them all, Janey found. And as for remembering every name, she wasn't sure that she could ever do it.

While Janey was dressing and undressing the children, Mother and Aunt Ellen went out to make a call upon Mother's old friend and dress-maker, Miss Bates. Jacky was taking his nap in the spare room, and Maria was in the kitchen, stewing plums.

Suddenly there was a thump from the spare room and a loud cry. Jacky had fallen out of bed!

Maria ran up from the kitchen to find Janey already rubbing Jacky's bumped head. But though Janey rubbed his bump tenderly, and clapped her hands, and sang his favorite tune, and though Maria danced him up and down upon her knee, Jacky's feelings were hurt more than his head, and first he wouldn't and then he couldn't stop crying.

"I know what to do," said Janey at last,

when she and Maria were quite tired out. "Let us sail his duck for him in the bathtub. That ought to make him stop crying."

Janey was right. Jacky, smiling now, though his fat cheeks were still wet with tears, pulled bravely at the string that made Master Duck swim up and down the length of Aunt Ellen's bathtub. Maria and Janey and Josie Anna stood by, enjoying the pleasant sight.

But before long, a strange odor floated up from below. Maria sniffed the air.

"My plums!" exclaimed Maria wildly. "My plums are scorching! Watch the baby, Janey, that's a lamb."

And away downstairs hurried Maria, thinking to herself that you couldn't tend a crying baby and stew plums at the same time.

But something worse than scorching plums was to happen to Janey.

I suppose Jacky grew tired of pulling his duck to and fro. I suppose Janey turned her head away for less than a minute. At any rate, before

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she could stop him, Janey saw Jacky seize Josie Anna, fling her into the tub half-full of water, and then on his hands and knees creep away toward the stairs as fast as he could go. And that was very fast, you may remember, quite as fast as Janey could run.

“Oh, Josie Anna! Oh, Jacky!”

Janey didn’t know which one to rescue first — Josie Anna from her watery bed or Jacky from a tumble down the stairs.

But Josie Anna was lying quite quietly now at the bottom of the tub, and every second Jacky was drawing nearer the head of the stairs.

So Janey ran after Jacky.

“Maria!” called Janey in a piteous voice, and caught Jacky by the back of his dress just as he was about to start headlong down the flight of stairs. Janey pulled one way and Jacky the other, but Janey was the stronger, and somehow she dragged him back into the spare room and by a great effort hoisted him up upon the bed.

There he lay, perhaps too tired by the struggle to cry.

At any rate, he only lay and stared at Janey and at Maria, who finally came panting into the room.

"Josie Anna is in the bathtub, Maria," said Janey, her face puckered with distress, "in the very bottom of the tub. Jacky threw her in."

"In a minute, lovey," whispered the distracted Maria. "Let us see if the baby won't go to sleep now. Then Maria will fix your doll baby for you as good as new."

Jacky's eyelids opened and closed, opened and closed again. Up and down, up and down went his eyelids, and then they shut tight.

"Hs-sh!" said Maria. "Don't breathe."

Jacky was asleep.

Maria did all she could for Josie Anna. She squeezed the water from her dripping form, she pulled her already floppy body and features back into place. But in the end Josie Anna had to be hung out on the clothesline to dry.

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Janey felt as if her heart would break when she saw Josie Anna swinging limply to and fro. How would she feel if she were hung up in such a way?

But Mother made everything seem quite different when she came home from her call.

"I don't believe Josie Anna minds it one bit," said Mother consolingly. "She is probably glad to be out in the sun and wind and fresh air after being shut up in the basket so long. I think she looks happy, Janey. I declare, her mouth is quite smiling."

Yes, after looking closely, Janey saw the smile, too.

"But it is hard work taking care of a family, isn't it, Mother?" said Janey.

And Mother, with a little laugh, said she thought it was.

CHAPTER V

POKY ANN

JANEY stood in Mother's room with her back against the wall. Her face was red and she was winking hard to keep the tears back. Her fresh white dress was badly rumpled where she had pulled and twisted it, and her hair stood out all round her head as wildly as if Mother had not brushed it smooth a half-hour ago.

Janey was angry. Her feelings were hurt, too. And it was all Mattie Perks's fault.

Mattie Perks was a little girl from the village who came every day to take care of Jacky and to run errands for Mother.

Mattie Perks was twelve years old. Of course she was much older than Janey. Janey herself admitted that. But, after all, Mattie Perks was only a little girl; she was not grown-up. And Janey didn't like the way Mattie Perks treated her at all.

“She acts as if she were my mother,” said

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Janey to herself, as Mattie Perks ordered her about and told her what she might do or say. "And she isn't my mother. She is only a little girl like me."

This afternoon Mother and Janey and Jacky were to go calling upon Mother's friend, Miss Bates, and Mattie Perks was to go along, too, to push Jacky's carriage.

Now it may have been that Janey was a little slow. But Janey dearly liked to carry a fan, and, at the last moment, hunt through Mother's bureau as she might, she couldn't find a fan of any kind. She couldn't find her pretty blue fan with the sprays of pink roses, nor her gay Japanese fan covered over with tiny men and women and houses and bridges and trees. She couldn't find even a fan belonging to Mother, which she would have been glad to borrow just for the afternoon.

Mother and Jacky and Mattie Perks were waiting below on the porch.

"Janey," called Mother, "come! We are waiting."

Janey was tossing and tumbling everything about in the top drawer as fast as she could, but not a fan could she find.

“Ja-nee!” came Mother’s voice again. “Ja-nee!”

“I won’t be a minute, Mother,” answered Janey, with her head in the drawer.

But of course Mother, down on the porch, couldn’t hear a word she said.

Perhaps a fan was in this box, or in this one. Perhaps she would find one in the lowest drawer.

Janey meant to take just one more hasty look, when up the stairs ran Mattie Perks and hustled into the room.

“Come, Janey,” said she, in a way that Janey found disagreeable. “Your mother says to come right straight away. She says she won’t wait another minute.”

This didn’t sound like Mother. Janey didn’t believe she had said that at all. Besides, Mattie Perks made her feel cross.

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“I can’t find my fan,” said Janey, scowling up her face and turning her back upon Mattie. She felt that she didn’t want to look at Mattie’s sharp black eyes and prim little mouth. “I can’t come until I find my fan.”

“You don’t need a fan, child,” declared Mattie Perks. “Come along. You are a regular Poky Ann. That is what you are. A Poky Ann, if ever there was one.”

And she caught Janey by the arm and dragged her toward the door.

Poky Ann! A regular Poky Ann!

This was too much.

Janey wrenched her arm from Mattie’s grasp and gave her a push that sent Mattie Perks flying out into the hall with a rush.

If Mattie had come back into the room, I don’t know what Janey would have done to her. But Mattie didn’t.

She only put her head in the door, her black eyes snapping sparks, or so it seemed to angry Janey, and said in a loud whisper:

"All right, Miss Janey, all right for you. Just you wait and see. I am going right down and tell your mother."

Down the stairs clattered Mattie. Then up floated her voice.

"She won't come, Mrs. Thorn. She says she can't find her fan and she won't come without it. She is just as cross as she can be, too."

Janey waited, winking back the tears. Surely Mother would come and straighten out this horrid tangle. It was all Mattie Perks's fault, too.

But, no. Down the front path went Mother, holding her pretty white parasol over her head, and at her side, where Janey should have been, walked Mattie Perks, who smiled at Jacky as if she were the sweetest-tempered little girl in the world.

Janey could scarcely believe her eyes. But it was true. She watched them down the road out of sight. Then Janey threw herself on the floor and rolled over and over and over until she

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reached the bed. Under the bed went Janey to cry as if her heart would break.

Bad Mattie Perks to call her names. Poky Ann! Poky Ann! Janey hadn't said, "I won't come." She had said, "I can't come." And that was very different. Why had Mother gone without her? And what would Miss Bates think? Oh, dear! Oh, dear! It was all Mattie Perks's fault. That's whose fault it was.

Up the stairs came footsteps, creaking, creaking along. Was it Uncle John or Lucretia? Janey stopped crying to peep out and see.

It was Uncle John. He stood in the doorway and looked about the room. Then in he came to walk slowly up and down, up and down, his hands behind his back.

Janey lay as quiet as a mouse, watching Uncle John's shoes pass the bed.

By and by the shoes stood still. Slowly, very slowly, Uncle John bent down upon his knees. Slowly, very slowly, he leaned over until he was looking straight into Janey's tear-wet eyes.

Without a word Uncle John stretched out his hand, Janey put hers into it, and the next moment Janey had scrambled from under the bed and was folded in Uncle John's arms.

"She called me 'Poky Ann,'" sobbed Janey.
"She called me 'Poky Ann.'"

Uncle John soothingly patted Janey on the back, and presently she found herself sitting on Uncle John's lap, telling him of her trouble with Mattie Perks and how Mother had gone and left her without a single word.

"It was all Mattie Perks's fault," repeated Janey over and over. "She called me 'Poky Ann.'"

Uncle John nodded and patted until the story was finished.

Then, smoothing back Janey's hair from her hot face, he said:

"Wait until your mother comes home to-night and tell her all about it. She will make it right, Janey. Now put on your hat and come with me. I am going to see an old friend and take him some tobacco."

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“My dress,” faltered Janey. “It is all wrinkled and dirty.”

And truly it was. You cannot make calls in a dress in which you have rolled under the bed, and Uncle John with clumsy fingers unbuttoned the rumpled white frock and helped Janey slip it off.

“We won’t bother Lucretia,” said Uncle John, from the depths of Mother’s closet. “We can get along without womenfolk, you and I. Here, put this on, Janey. It is pretty and cool.”

Uncle John brought out a little blue pinafore into which he buttoned Janey and tied the sash in a fashion all his own. Neither of them noticed, nor would have cared if they had, that Janey wore no dress under the pinafore and that her little white petticoat bobbed out behind.

Uncle John carefully wiped a smudge of dirt from her chin and helped her find her hat. Then hand in hand they set out to visit Uncle John’s friend.

As they walked along, Janey spoke only once of Mattie Perks.

“Do you think Poky Ann is a very nice name to call anybody?” asked Janey, with a little quiver of the lip.

“Why, I think it is rather a funny little name,” replied Uncle John.

But Janey shook her head.

“I don’t,” said Janey.

Uncle John’s friend proved to be an old man named Captain Ben, who had once been a sailor. And while he and Uncle John talked and smoked indoors, Janey amused herself out in the front yard watching Captain Ben’s weathervane turn slowly round and round in the breeze.

Janey had never seen anything like this weathervane. It was made of four little sail-boats, facing north, south, east, and west, and was fastened to the top of a tall pole. The snowy white sails blew in and out, the pole creaked musically, and Janey wished that her friend Mr. Banta were with her, so that he

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might tell little Joey Banta all about this ship-shape weathervane.

On the way home, walking slowly up Humpty Dumpty Road, suddenly Janey and Uncle John stood still. First they looked at one another, and then, hand in hand, they hurried up the road. For they heard noises, strange cries and screams that seemed to come from their own front yard.

Yes, there by the porch steps stood Mother, vainly trying to quiet Jacky, who was screaming and jumping up and down in his carriage. While back and forth on the path whirled Mattie Perks, waving one hand in the air, and dancing and shrieking as she whirled.

“A bee! A bee!” screamed Mattie Perks. “My hand! My hand! a bee!”

“A bee has stung her,” called Mother, catching sight of Janey and Uncle John. “Oh, help her, do. Jacky isn’t hurt, only frightened, but I can’t leave him a moment. Oh, do help Mattie if you can, do.”

“Run up to my closet, Janey,” said Uncle John, very gently catching Mattie Perks by the shoulder as she whirled past, “and bring down the bottle of witch hazel. You know where it is, don’t you?”

Yes, Janey knew very well where the witch hazel was. Had not Uncle John taken it down from the shelf only the night before to rub on Janey’s knees to help cure her of “growing pains,” from which she often suffered nowadays?

Janey ran through the house like the wind, Mattie Perks’s cries of pain following her upstairs and down again.

As she came out on the porch, the bottle clasped in her arms, she heard Uncle John say to Mattie:

“Now we will make the pain stop. Here is Janey back already. I knew she wouldn’t be a minute, she is such a quick little girl.”

And Uncle John, as gently as could be, bandaged Mattie’s poor aching hand with his own

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big white handkerchief, well soaked in cool and soothing witch hazel.

Poor Mattie Perks! She sat on the lowest porch step, her hand held straight out before her, and the tears rolling down her cheeks.

Janey stood by, with a heart filled with pity and the wish to help.

Poor Mattie! The sharp black eyes were red and swollen now, and the prim little mouth quivered piteously every now and then.

Softly Janey crept to Mattie's side and put both arms about the sufferer's neck.

"I didn't mean to push you to-day," whispered Janey. "I didn't mean to push you at all." And she placed a soft kiss in the center of Mattie's cheek.

Mattie turned and stared for a moment into the friendly, round little face, all puckered now with tenderest sympathy. Then she laid her head on Janey's shoulder and began to cry again.

Janey hadn't expected this, but she held tight to Mattie's neck.

"And you may call me 'Poky Ann' all you like," said Janey in a burst of love, "and I shan't mind it one bit, not one little bit."

"I don't want to call you 'Poky Ann,'" sobbed Mattie. "You are not a 'Poky Ann.' You are quick. Your Uncle John said so. And you brought the witch hazel in a minute. I will never, never call you 'Poky Ann' again."

"But you may if you like," insisted Janey, not to be outdone in generosity, "because, do you know, Mattie, I think 'Poky Ann' is a funny little name. I do."

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY HUMPTY DUMPTY TOLD

IT was a warm afternoon. Janey had been playing in the sun — working, she called it — trying to dig a hole straight through the earth to China. Old Burris, who tended the garden, had told Janey that if she dug a hole deep enough she would come out in China, where she would find little Chinese babies with long black pigtails, who would be only too glad to play with her.

So Janey had dug patiently until her arms ached and her face was hot and red, and had met with nothing more interesting than a brown earthworm or two.

On the wall before her Humpty Dumpty sat in the shade. He looked so cool and comfortable that at last Janey put down her spade and, leaving the Chinese babies for another day, clambered up beside him.

“You are as cold as snow,” said Janey, placing her hot cheek against Humpty Dumpty’s

cool one. "I like to sit up here beside you, Humpty Dumpty."

Indeed it was pleasant on the shady wall. The oak tree cast a dappled shadow on the grass below, the birds overhead twittered sleepily in the heat, a big blue butterfly drowsed on a nodding wild carrot blossom, and Janey, with drooping eyes, leaned heavily against the sturdy form of little Humpty Dumpty.

It was very quiet on the wall. Janey did not speak for a long, long time. She was thinking of the Chinese babies, and of how strange Jacky would look if he wore a long black pigtail sprouting from the top of his head. Humpty Dumpty, here, had no hair at all, not so much as a wisp. Janey wondered whether he had always been as bald as an egg. She wished that she could ask him and find out. But hair or no hair, Janey was fond of Humpty Dumpty.

"I like you better than the Chinese babies," murmured Janey, "and I hope you never fall off this wall, Humpty Dumpty."

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“I won’t,” answered Humpty Dumpty, in a cheerful little voice. “You may be sure of that.”

“Why, you can talk!” exclaimed Janey, as pleased as could be. “I didn’t know that you could talk. Why have you never spoken to me before, Humpty Dumpty?”

“Because it wasn’t the right time,” was Humpty Dumpty’s answer.

“But it is the right time now?” asked Janey. “Then you can tell me something I want to know. If you fell off the wall and all the King’s horses and all the King’s men couldn’t put you together again, how is it that you are sitting up here now?”

“You have never heard the whole story of the time I fell off the wall,” explained Humpty Dumpty. “I will tell you just how it was, if you would like to know.”

“Of course I would,” said Janey, pressing her hands tightly together as she settled herself comfortably to listen.

Oh, if Mr. Banta were only here! No doubt he had been right about Mother Goose. She might come stepping down the road at any moment, Janey thought.

“I am glad to tell this story,” began Humpty Dumpty, “because it has always hurt my feelings to have people think that I was the kind of a fellow who didn’t know how to sit up on a wall. But when you hear about it, you will see that it was really not my fault.”

“Of course it wasn’t,” agreed loyal Janey. “I always knew that.”

Humpty Dumpty looked pleased and went on with his story.

“You know the fairies and I are good friends,” said Humpty Dumpty, “and old friends, too.”

“There now!” exclaimed Janey. “Didn’t I say so? The very first day I came out here to talk?”

“Yes, you did,” replied Humpty Dumpty, “and you were right. Well, one night I went to spend the evening with a family of fairies I knew,

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who lived in a rosebush that grew by a wall."

"What color roses?" interrupted Janey.

"Pink," said Humpty Dumpty. "It was a Dorothy Perkins rosebush, and of course the fairies' name was Perkins. They took their name from the rosebush, you see."

"I am glad the roses were pink," said Janey, "because pink is my favorite color."

"The father fairy, Mr. Perkins, and I were sitting out under the rosebush," went on Humpty Dumpty. "We were smoking our Indian pipes and drinking honey dew, when Mrs. Perkins, who was up in the bush putting the children to bed, called out to come quickly, that Tippy was choking to death."

"Who was Tippy?" interrupted Janey again.

"Tippy Perkins was the next to the youngest child, a nice little thing, no taller than a rose-leaf," said Humpty Dumpty. "Mr. Perkins rushed up the branches and I climbed on the wall, and, sure enough, Tippy was purple in the face and gasping, and Mrs. Perkins was wring-

ing her hands, and the other children were crying and hopping about until the whole bush rocked to and fro as if a strong wind were blowing.

“Mr. Perkins began to run his fingers down Tippy’s throat. That sometimes does a great deal of good, you know. And I said that I would go for the doctor.”

“Do the fairies have doctors?” asked Janey.
“Do they have to take medicine, too?”

Humpty Dumpty nodded.

“Fairy medicine,” said he. “Tiger-lily wine to make them strong, and a lady’s-slipper poultice for a sore toe, and the like.”

“That doesn’t sound like our medicine,” said Janey. “I think I would like fairy medicine best.”

“Perhaps,” said Humpty Dumpty, doubtfully. “But they don’t like it very well. I ran all the way to the doctor’s, and though I rode back with him on his butterfly, I was still out of breath when we reached the Perkins’s bush.

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So I sat down on the wall to rest, while the doctor pulled the pokeberry out of Tippy's throat."

"The what?" asked Janey, "out of his throat?"

"Pokeberry, pokeberry," said Humpty Dumpty, a trifle impatiently. "Tippy had swallowed a green pokeberry. That was what ailed him. Then the doctor went home. I was still sitting on the wall, cooling off and resting. I may have nodded a little. I was tired.

"Now I don't know to this day just exactly what happened." Here Humpty Dumpty's voice grew low and mysterious. "But I suspect that Widget Perkins — he was the eldest boy, a mischievous, tricksy fellow, always joking with me about the size of my waist, or tickling a field mouse's whiskers, or jostling a butterfly off a flower — I suspect that Widget Perkins came up behind and pushed me off the wall, just for fun."

"You do?" exclaimed Janey. "You do? Why?"

“I always thought he looked guilty,” said Humpty Dumpty, thoughtfully. “But of course I don’t know how he looked at the time, for there I lay on the ground, in pretty bad shape. My head was cracked in fifty different places, so they tell me.”

“Tst-tst-tst,” said Janey, sympathetically, and in imitation of Uncle John.

“The Perkinses didn’t seem to know what to do, so they sent for the King, the King of the fairies, to see what he would advise. And he ordered out all his horses and all his men.”

“What did they do?” asked Janey, her eyes big and round.

“They tried to put me up again on the wall, of course,” was Humpty Dumpty’s answer, “but they couldn’t do it. They tried their best, but they couldn’t do it. I simply wasn’t in any shape to be put back on the wall. And then along came Mr. Perkins’s old grandmother, a wise old lady, too. She had just heard of Tippy and his pokeberry, and she had brought

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him a jar of her best bittersweet marmalade.

“‘Run for the Little Red Hen!’ said Mr. Perkins’s grandmother. ‘She will know what to do for Humpty Dumpty.’”

“What Little Red Hen?” demanded Janey. “The Little Red Hen that found the grain of wheat and made the loaf of bread all by herself?”

“The very same one,” said Humpty Dumpty. “So you know about her, do you?”

“She is in my green book,” said Janey. “And did she know what to do? Did she?”

“She did,” answered Humpty Dumpty, proudly. “The Little Red Hen made my head as good as new. In fact she may have given me a new head, for all I know.”

“There isn’t a crack in it now,” agreed Janey, “for I have looked. Oh, I am so glad Mr. Perkins’s grandmother thought of the Little Red Hen. Do you ever see the Perkinses now, Humpty Dumpty? Where do they live? Is their rosebush near?”

Janey’s foot was asleep. It was full of prick-

lings and strange numb feelings. She was obliged to swing it to and fro, and for a moment could not listen to Humpty Dumpty.

Then she asked again, "Do you ever see the Perkinses now? Where do they live?"

But Humpty Dumpty did not answer, and Janey turned to look closely at him.

Humpty Dumpty stared unwinkingly before him, his broad mouth closed as tightly as if it had never been opened at all.

"Humpty Dumpty!" called Janey. "Humpty Dumpty!"

Again there was no answer. But Janey understood and softly patted Humpty Dumpty's cheek.

"I suppose this isn't the right time for you to speak," said Janey. "But you did talk to me, Humpty Dumpty. You know you did. And you will talk to me again sometime, won't you? Oh, I do hope you will."

CHAPTER VII

AN ERRAND UP THE ROAD

JANEY was going on an errand for Mother. She was to carry a book to Mother's friend, Mrs. Berry, who lived up the road, past the church, and just the other side of a large gray house that stood behind a low stone wall.

It was the first time Janey had been trusted to go on an errand all by herself. Mattie Perks was to have gone with her, but Mattie Perks had a toothache that morning, and so, escorted by Lucretia, had been obliged to pay a visit to the dentist in the neighboring town.

"I can go alone, Mother," Janey had begged. "I know the way. I won't be lost, and I won't drop the book. I will hold it as tight as tight can be."

So now Janey was stepping proudly along the road, carrying the book, nicely wrapped in paper, under her arm.

Of course she knew the way. Had she not

been already twice to this very house, once with Mother to take tea with Mrs. Berry, and once again with Uncle John, who had gone to see Dr. Berry about a bone in his leg?

How easy and pleasant it was to go on errands! But that was because Janey was now a big girl. A little girl, of course, could not be trusted. A little girl would probably lose her way, or drop the book, or even tumble down in the dust. Janey would now do all the errands for Mother; indeed, for every one at Humpty Dumpty House. She would go to the village and buy newspapers for Uncle John, and spools of thread for Mother, and pounds of sugar for Lucretia. There surely was nothing more simple in the world than going on errands, thought Janey, with an airy toss of her head.

Here was the pretty white church, with the pointed steeple, where Janey went with Mother and Uncle John every Sunday morning. To-day the front doors were tightly shut and locked, no doubt. There was no one about save the little

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birds, who fearlessly hopped up and down the church steps, and perched upon the window sills and over the door of the empty building.

Next to the church stood the large gray house set behind a low stone wall. The lawn was wide and deep, and in a far corner Janey spied a white animal, nibbling the grass under a tree.

“It is a big white dog,” thought Janey, stopping to look, “or perhaps a dear little white lamb. I wish it would come walking down to the wall.”

The animal raised its head. It stared at Janey, and then, almost as if it had heard her wish, walked slowly toward her across the lawn.

As it drew nearer Janey saw that it was not a dog. It was not a lamb. It was not even a sheep. Janey did not know what kind of an animal it was.

Now quite plainly she could see a pair of horns, two cold gray eyes, and a little chin whisker that somehow gave to the animal’s face a mischievous, wicked look.

Janey didn't like his face at all. She wished he would walk back under the tree. She wished Mother were with her. She wished she were safe in Mrs. Berry's house. She wished with all her heart that she had not come on this errand, and she made up her mind that never, never would she go on an errand again.

The animal broke into a run, a gentle trot, and Janey ran, too. By the time the animal reached the stone fence he was no longer running, but was leaping and bounding along. To Janey's horror he gave one great jump over the wall, and came dancing and prancing up the road straight toward her.

“Mother! Mother!” screamed poor Janey.
“Mother!”

She sent a terrified glance over her shoulder and saw that the animal was very near, indeed.

Oh, if there were only a place to hide! Oh, if Mother would only come and save her!

“Mother!” screamed Janey again. “Mother!”

How very far away Mrs. Berry's house

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seemed! Oh, why didn't she come out and drive this dreadful creature away!

Janey, running and crying, tripped over a stone. She stumbled and almost fell. But, worse even than falling, out of her arms flew Mother's book, and lay in the road directly in the path of this wild beast.

The animal stood still. He stared curiously at the neat little white parcel lying so defenseless in the middle of the road. Then he began to nose and paw and push it about in the dust.

"It is Mother's book," called Janey in a trembling voice, halting at a safe distance and peeping out from behind a bush. "Don't you touch it! Don't you dare!"

But, instead of obeying this command and walking meekly away from Mother's parcel, as any well-meaning animal would have done, this creature, in the boldest way Janey had ever seen, tore off the paper wrapping. He sniffed scornfully at the pretty blue cover, and then, before Janey's horrified eyes, proceeded to

bite out whole pages of the book, and to leisurely chew and swallow them down.

"It is a tiger," flashed through terrified Janey's mind. "Tigers eat people up like that. I've seen pictures."

And leaving the poor little book to its fate — indeed, what else could she do? — Janey ran, without one look behind, over the lawn and round to Mrs. Berry's back door.

"It is a tiger," sobbed Janey, tumbling headlong into the kitchen. "It is a tiger, out in the road. He chased me, and he is eating up Mother's book. It is a ti—ger."

With a loud wail, Janey threw herself into Mrs. Berry's arms, and it is quite true that for perhaps a whole minute Mrs. Berry didn't know what to think. For of course she was surprised. Any one would be at hearing that there was a tiger out in front of the house. But first she held Janey close and promised that the tiger shouldn't hurt her no matter what happened, and next she called Dr. Berry, who fortunately

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sat writing in his office just at that moment.

"A tiger? On our front lawn?" said Dr. Berry. "Where is my big stick?"

And with his heaviest stick in his hand, Dr. Berry bravely went out to find the tiger.

When at last he came back, Janey was so far recovered from her fright that she could sit up on his knee and listen to what he had to say.

"It was not a tiger, Janey," said Dr. Berry. "It was a goat, a billy goat that belongs to three boys who live next door. I have driven him home, and the boys have tied him fast with four ropes and an iron chain, so that he can't possibly get away."

Janey breathed a sigh of relief. It was a comfort to know that tigers were not allowed to run about the roads of Hebron. If they were, how would Janey ever dare to go alone on an errand again?

But a goat, a dancing, prancing billy goat? In her heart, remembering his hard, gray eyes, his little wagging beard, his curling horns,

Janey thought there was very little to choose between a tiger and a billy goat.

But she did not say this out loud.

“Mother’s book?” she asked anxiously. “I was carrying it here on an errand and I dropped it. But I wouldn’t have dropped it if I hadn’t stumbled over a stone, and I wouldn’t have stumbled if I hadn’t been running away. Did he eat it all?”

“Well, Janey, the book is pretty well chewed up,” answered Dr. Berry. “A goat will eat anything, you know — ribbons, and hats, and ropes, and papers, and tin cans. And this goat has eaten so many things that I think he is in real trouble this time. The boys’ mother doesn’t like the way he behaves at all. She says it may be that the boys will have to give him away, and she says, too, that they must buy a new book for your mother out of their own money. But the boys want to give you a present, Janey, right now. They told me to tell you it is because their goat frightened you. So if you

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will go over there, to the barn, with me, we will get it."

"I am afraid," said Janey, clutching Dr. Berry's coat. "The goat might chase me again."

"He can't," explained Dr. Berry. "He is tied fast. I saw him myself. And I will hold your hand, if you like, until you aren't afraid any more."

The three boys next door were lined up in a row in the doorway of their barn, waiting for Janey and Dr. Berry. They had been practicing what they would say to Janey, for they each spoke up in turn.

"I am sorry our goat frightened you," began the tallest boy, Charles. "We have tied him fast so that he will never get away again."

"We are going to buy a new book for your mother, out of our own money, too," said the plumpest boy, William. "Mother says we have to, and that means that we can't buy our new fishing-rods this summer."

“We have a present for you,” said the smallest, most smiling boy, James, “and here it is.”

From behind his back he brought out a kitten, the tiniest, furriest, softest kitten Janey had ever seen.

“Here, take him; he is yours,” said James. “And do try to give him the cream off the milk once in a while. He is so fond of it.”

“I will,” promised Janey eagerly, smiling for the first time that morning since she had seen the goat. “Lucretia will give me cream for him. I know she will.”

And she stretched out her arms for the kitty and cuddled him comfortably up in her neck.

“Do you like him?” asked William. “I thought you would. I was the one who said to give him to you.”

“We haven’t named him yet,” said Charles, “so you have your choice. We thought of naming him Asbury Park, because we spent a summer there once and went in bathing every day. Or else we were going to call him Pixie, because

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he has such a cunning little face, just like a pixie or a fairy, we think."

"I will call him all three," exclaimed Janey, charmed with these new names. "Asbury Pixie Park. Don't you like that? I have three names, Janey Prince Thorn. Why can't the kitty have three names too?"

"He can," said Dr. Berry. "It is quite usual to have three names. I have three myself. But, Janey, look at your friend, the goat, before we go. You see he can't possibly get away."

Over in the corner of the barn stood the frisky goat, so wound about and tangled up in his four ropes and iron chain that he looked as though he would never take a free step again. He wagged his beard and stared boldly at Janey as if he remembered with pleasure her wild flight down the road and the tidbit she had flung in his path.

"His name is Borneo," said little James. "He is named for the Wild Man of Borneo. Father named him."

Janey gave Borneo one sidelong glance and then looked hastily away. How could the boys want such a pet when they might have instead a dear little gray kitten like Asbury Pixie Park?

But Janey liked the boys in spite of their strange taste, and she turned again and again to wave good-bye as she and Pixie and Dr. Berry started for home.

“I will tell you something,” said Janey, after a moment, looking up into Dr. Berry’s face. “The next time I go on an errand I will take my kitty with me. Then, if a goat or a tiger chases me, I shan’t be afraid, for I shan’t be all alone. Will I, Asbury Pixie Park?”

CHAPTER VIII

RUNAWAY PIXIE

IT is quite true that Asbury Pixie Park was a most witching, mischievous, tricksy little cat.

Janey found it out on the very day that she carried Pixie home with her, and she grew more and more sure of it with every hour that followed.

In the first place Pixie was well named. He had a wise, knowing little face, with its bright yellow eyes that gleamed like candle-flames in the dusk, its two sharp-pointed ears twitching with secrets well worth knowing, Janey had no doubt, and the wide mouth that gave him such a droll, smiling look that you simply felt sure Pixie was thinking of something pleasant and mysterious all the while.

Then, Pixie had a strange way of appearing and disappearing, just as you would expect an elf or a fairy to do.

Janey might be nicely settled, on a rainy after-

noon, with a picture-book and Pixie close by, where Janey might put out her hand and pat him whenever she liked. Surely nothing could be more comfortable and satisfactory for them both. And yet in a moment Janey might look up to find Pixie gone, and hunt as she would over the house from garret to cellar, Pixie was not to be found. He hadn't ventured out of the house, for would he not then wet his feet? And every one knows how a cat feels about wet feet.

"Oh, cats find places to hide where you would never dream of looking," said Mother, as she met Janey peering into closets or toiling up and down the garret stairs.

But Uncle John felt more as Janey did.

"It is strange," agreed Uncle John. "Your Pixie is quite like a cat in a fairy-book. It wouldn't surprise me at all to have him turn into a Prince. I only hope, if he ever does, that he won't want to drive you away with him in a chariot and four."

Janey did not quite agree with Uncle John

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in this wish. To drive off in a golden chariot drawn by four white horses, and seated beside a Prince, a beautiful fairy Prince, seemed a very pleasant idea to Janey.

“I like Princes in blue satin, with yellow curls,” observed Janey, thoughtfully. “There is the picture of one in my fairy-book, and I would like Pixie to be that kind of a Prince, if he does turn into one by and by.”

Then, too, Janey couldn’t understand how it happened that though Pixie, at night, tucked in his basket, might be safely shut in the little entry off the kitchen, yet morning after morning he would be found curled up on Janey’s bed, ready to scramble into her arms and lick her face with his rough little pink tongue if Janey so much as stirred or turned over.

“You put Pixie to bed yourself,” Lucretia would say, “and I know I shut the entry door before I went upstairs.”

“There is no one downstairs at night but Pierre,” pondered Janey, shaking her head over

the puzzle, "and he wouldn't open the door for Pixie if he could. He doesn't like him."

No, Pierre had disliked Pixie at first sight. He had croaked and hissed at him, and had danced, for Pixie's benefit, a little angry jig on the floor of his cage, to which Pixie had made generous return, from Janey's arms, by spitting up at him, not at all like a baby kitten, but in a most grown-up, cat-like way.

Certainly Pierre would not have done Pixie the favor of opening the entry door for him even if he had been a man, say, like Uncle John, who prowled about the house the last thing every night, turning off lights and locking doors and windows tight.

Besides being playful and ready for a romp at any moment, there were times when Pixie ran away. I don't mean just round and round the garden, chasing his own tail, but down the road and quite out of sight.

Janey often wanted to follow him and meant to, some day, and she always wondered where

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Pixie went and what he did on these occasions.

One pleasant afternoon Janey sat on the porch steps holding Pixie firmly between her knees. Round the kitten's squirming shoulders was draped a pink blanket, borrowed from the doll's bed which old Burris had made for Janey, and which was fortunately wide enough to hold Elly and the beautiful "Princess" at the same time. On Pixie's head was tied a white ruffled doll's cap, and from it his little gray furry face peered out in a most comical manner.

"Don't wriggle so, Pixie," said Janey, trying to tuck the cap strings under the blanket. "You know these cap strings tickle your whiskers and make you sneeze. And how can you expect to go to sleep if you are sneezing every other minute?"

Pixie's only answer was a wide pink yawn.

"There now," said Janey, "you are sleepy. Lie right down here and shut your eyes, and you will sail off to sleep in no time."

But Pixie had other plans. Instead of shut-

ting his eyes and sailing off to sleep, as no lively kitten would wish to do in the middle of a cool, summer afternoon, wise little Pixie suddenly ceased his struggles and lay quite still. Then, with a bound, he unexpectedly leaped from Janey's arms, clawed himself free from the pink blanket, and was off across the lawn and round the corner of the house.

“Come back, come back!” called Janey, starting to her feet. “You have on my best dolly cap.”

But Pixie cared nothing for that, and Janey knew that he didn’t. So in a flash Janey was after him.

Up the road sped four gray legs followed by two white ones. Sometimes Janey seemed to gain, then Pixie would bound far ahead. Once Pixie sat down in the road to rest, and almost seemed to smile as he watched Janey, out of breath, sink down upon a roadside stone.

“Oh, Pixie,” called Janey, “the cap strings are dragging in the dust. Come here and let me

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take the cap off, do. Come here this minute, sir."

Do you think Pixie obeyed his little mistress? Not at all. Off he trotted again, and Janey saw with dismay that Pixie had turned up the road that led past the church and his former home, that led straight to Borneo, with his cold, gray eyes, his wagging chin whisker, and his appetite that stopped not at books, ribbons, tin cans, perhaps not even at gray kittens nor at little girls who wandered far from home.

"I can't go up this road," called Janey, "I can't. Come back, Pixie, come back."

But somehow Janey did run on until she reached the church.

And then Pixie vanished!

Janey had seen him quite plainly, his little be-capped white head bobbing along the ground, and the very next moment he was not to be seen anywhere. It was as if the earth had parted and swallowed him up.

The church doors stood open, though it was

not Sunday, but Janey felt sure Pixie had not run up the church steps. Where could he be? Would Janey dare climb the church steps and peep inside?

She stood at the foot of the steps, looking up and wishing that she could see Pixie's little gray face, when down the road rolled three automobiles. They stopped before the church, and Janey, shrinking to one side, saw ladies, gay in filmy white and pink, and gentlemen, in black, step from the automobiles and walk up into the church.

But from the third automobile who was this coming toward her? Who was this boy dressed in pale blue satin, with golden curls that blew out in the soft summer wind?

Blue satin, golden curls, and rosy cheeks? He must be a Prince! A Prince, no less! Janey recalled the picture at home in her fairy-book. The Prince without doubt that Uncle John had mentioned.

Why, it might be Pixie. Pixie had disap-

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peared. It *was* Pixie, turned into a Prince, just as Uncle John had said, Pixie who had vanished from sight not five minutes ago only to reappear in the form of a beautiful Prince. Janey had always felt certain that there was something fairylike and strange about Pixie, and now here was the proof. Pixie was not a pussycat. Pixie was a Prince.

Some one, a Lady-in-Waiting, perhaps, was pulling the Prince's coat straight. Janey saw the glisten of blue satin, the twinkle of silver buckles on his shoes. Then he, too, mounted the steps and entered the church.

Janey was thinking hard. She did not even see the village children who had gathered beside her and who were staring up into the church. One or two bold spirits climbed the steps and peeped in at the open door, but Janey might have been alone for all she knew of what they did. She saw and heard nothing.

So this was the Prince, the fairy Prince! No doubt he lived in a snow-white palace, set

among trees brilliant with golden leaves and silver fruit. No doubt he slept on silken cushions and ate from crystal plates. And Ladies-in-Waiting and Knights and Knaves and all sorts of strange and interesting people stood round and obeyed his slightest wish.

And Janey was to ride away with him. Not, to be sure, in a golden coach drawn by four white horses, but still in an automobile that was far more shiny than Uncle John's old car.

A little boy Prince, too! It would make it much pleasanter for Janey to have some one her own age to play with her. For at first she might be a little lonely — lonely for Mother, and Jacky, and Aunt Ellen, and Elly, and Lucretia, and Pierre. What would Father, in the far, frozen North, say when he heard that his Janey had ridden off with a Prince?

“What Prince?” Father would ask.

“A fairy Prince who was once a pussycat,” Mother would reply.

Janey shut her teeth together. Her hands

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were clenched in two tight little balls. There was such a lump in her throat that she could scarcely breathe. Homesick? Was Janey homesick? How could she be homesick when she was to ride away with a fairy Prince?

Janey peered up at the church door. There was no Prince in sight. He was safe inside, but to stay Janey did not know how long.

Then Janey began to run. She ran as she had never run before in all her life. Down the road, dust flying. Round the corner, her heart pounding at sight of an old hen who scuttled across the road in front of her with a frightened squawk. Along Humpty Dumpty Road, up and down the humps and bumps. There was Uncle John's house, with precious, familiar Humpty Dumpty smiling at her from the wall. Across the lawn, in at the front door, up the stairs, and into Mother's closet with the door shut tight.

Safe! Safe at home! Safe from the Prince! For what Prince, fairy or no, would dream of

looking for her in Mother's closet, hiding flat against the wall, behind Mother's best blue silk dress? And, if he should come, Janey meant to hold fast to the doorknob and to scream with all her might and main.

But no one came. There was not the sound of a voice, there was not a step on the stair. After a while, Janey ventured to open the closet door. Then out she crept, and leaning over the banister heard Mother talking pleasantly down upon the porch.

So Janey, slowly, step by step, came down the stairs, and, talking politely to Mother on the porch, saw — whom do you think?

Not the Prince, oh, no! But smiling little James from the gray house next the church, and in his arms he was holding runaway Pixie!

“He came up to our house this afternoon,” James was saying, “and I carried him home because there was a wedding at the church, and I was afraid he might be run over, he is so small.”

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“Whose wedding was it?” asked Mrs. Thorn, smiling into James’s round, freckled face. “Do you know?”

“Yes, I know them all,” answered James proudly. “It was Mr. Young’s, the store-keeper’s daughter who was married. And I know a boy who was in the wedding, too. I went over to see him march in. He looked too silly. He was a page, all dressed up in blue, with his hair curled. I guess you know him. He brings the newspaper round every day.”

Janey sat down on the lowest stair. So that was the Prince — the little boy with the ragged cap, and the loud whistle, and, yes, the dirty hands, who left the newspaper every day for Uncle John. He lived in rooms over the store, that she knew, instead of in a snow-white palace, and Janey thought it quite likely he had never even heard of a Lady-in-Waiting, or a Knight, or perhaps even a Prince.

When James had gone, Janey came out on the porch. There lay Pixie, rolled up in a ball, sound

asleep — not a fairy, not a Prince, nothing but a comfortable, ordinary, little gray kitten, just like all the other little gray kittens all over the world. And, as Janey realized this, she knew she loved Pixie better at that moment than she ever had before. The white ruffled cap was gone, but Janey didn't care one bit.

“Tired?” asked Mother, looking into Janey's serious face and holding out her arms.

Janey nodded, and settled herself on her mother's lap.

“Yes, Mother,” answered Janey, solemnly, “I've been running. And I feel lonesome. I wish you would talk to me, Mother. Tell me what Father is doing now. But don't tell me any stories about Princes, Mother. I don't think I like Princes in blue satin, with yellow curls,” said Janey.

CHAPTER IX

JANEY'S SORE THUMB

JANEY had a sore thumb. It felt as though she had scratched it, and every now and then she put it in her mouth to make it feel better.

But Janey didn't think very often about her thumb, because she was watching for Miss Bates, who was to come and spend the day.

Miss Bates, you may remember, was Mother's old friend and dressmaker, and she was to come to-day to help Mother make rompers for Jacky. The neat little piles of pink and blue and white material were lying on the bed upstairs. Janey herself had seen them there not five minutes ago.

Janey was fond of Miss Bates and was glad that she was coming to spend the day. Indeed, I think all the little girls in Hebron village liked the kind old dressmaker. She could make the prettiest dolls' bonnets out of the tiniest scraps of material, and she often brought, in her sewing-bag, bits of ribbon or gay silks, just the

thing for a sash or a scarf or a workbag for a little girl's doll. And once or twice Miss Bates had been known to bring pieces of silk large enough for a doll's cape. But, of course, that didn't happen very often.

The little boys of Hebron were not so fond of Miss Bates, and the reason was not hard to find. It was because Miss Bates would put patches on the little boys' trousers, and every one knows that no little boy of spirit likes patches, be they ever so small. They were neat patches, and they pleased the mothers very much, indeed. But often you might see a group of little boys standing together, little boys who had patches on their trousers, perhaps on one knee, often on two, and even on the seat, for Miss Bates really seemed to have no heart at all when it came to patches. And these little boys, if they saw Miss Bates coming, would whisper together, and what they were saying was, "Here comes Old Hipperty-Hop! Here comes Old Hipperty-Hop!"

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For Miss Bates was a trifle lame — “stiff” she called it — and walked with a cane. You may be sure the little boys never spoke above a whisper, but “Old Hipperty-Hop” is what they called Miss Bates, just among themselves, and to pay her back, as it were, for those patched trousers.

It was a gray day, with little spirits of rain now and then, and it was between two showers that Janey saw Miss Bates, sewing-bag in one hand and cane in the other, coming down the street.

Janey ran to meet her and told Miss Bates all the news before they had even reached the porch steps.

“I have a sore thumb,” said Janey — “not very sore, only a little. And Uncle John has gone away. He will be gone two days and a night. And I am going to sew to-day, too. I am going to make an apron for my big doll, the one I call ‘the Princess,’ a pink apron. But if I had a piece of ribbon I would turn the apron

into a cape, because she really needs a cape much more than she does an apron."

Miss Bates laughed and shook her sewing-bag.

"I have a piece of green ribbon in my bag," said she, "that ought to be just the thing for a cape."

And indeed it was. A beautiful, bright, apple-green ribbon, that contrasted finely with the pink gingham that was now to be made into a cape.

Janey liked capes. All her children wore them. They were so easy to make, you see. Just gather them across the top, sew on your ribbon, and the cape is made.

So Janey settled herself happily in her little rocking-chair close beside Miss Bates and Mother. But before beginning her sewing, she watched Miss Bates's deft fingers twist and turn and pin the pink and blue and white material. She saw the shining shears flash in and out, slashing and snipping and snapping in the most business-like way. And lo! there lay on the

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table a pile of rompers all ready to be sewed, two blue, three pink, and three white, for Miss Bates counted them herself.

It all seemed very wonderful to Janey.

“I mean to be a dressmaker when I grow up,” said she, “for I don’t suppose I shall ever prick my finger then.”

Mother and Miss Bates meant to sew all day long, so Janey worked busily away on the cape, too. Of course that doesn’t mean she did nothing else at all. She played with Jacky, and she watched Miss Bates and Mother sew, and she talked with Lucretia in the kitchen, and she chased Pixie from garret to cellar twice, just for fun. So that it was nightfall before the last stitch was set in the cape and it was adjusted round the shoulders of the lovely “Princess,” with the green ribbon tied in a bow underneath her chin.

It was time, then, for Miss Bates to go home, but Mother came back from looking out of the window and shook her head.

"Don't try to go home, Miss Bates," said Mother. "It is raining so hard that I don't think you ought to go home to-night. If Uncle John were here he would drive you home in the car, but as he isn't, I think you had better stay all night."

Janey was delighted with this turn of affairs.

She sat up straight and smiled bravely all through supper, but she was obliged to put her sore thumb in her mouth so often that Mother noticed it. And after looking at the thumb, which was now quite red and swollen, Mother put something healing upon it and said that Janey had better go to bed.

"Ask Miss Bates to tuck me in, Mother, and let Elly sleep with me to-night," whispered Janey.

So Miss Bates patted and smoothed the bed-covers and kissed Janey good-night, all in such a comfortable, homelike way that Janey forgot about her thumb, and soon fell fast asleep, with

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Elly's trunk curled under her arm in the most affectionate way you can imagine.

Janey had meant to be up the very first one the next morning. But to her great surprise, as well as every one else's, Janey woke up crying.

"My thumb," sobbed Janey; "my thumb hurts."

Oh, how painful it was! Janey couldn't let Mother touch her hand at all. So Janey stayed quite still in bed, and listened to Mother, in the hall below, telephone for Dr. Berry.

"Will you hurt my thumb?" asked Janey anxiously, as the doctor presently came smiling into the room.

"Not one bit," said he cheerfully.

And he kept his word.

Very gently he smeared some salve upon it, and just as gently he wound a bandage round it. Then, tweaking patient Elly's trunk, and so making Janey laugh, Dr. Berry went away, with the promise that he would look in again later on.

After he had gone, Janey twisted about in bed and looked out of the window. Nothing to see out there but the dripping rain, a tree or two, and, far away, on the other side of the little river Jordan, a steep hill that rose sharply up and up to meet the sky.

Janey wished something would happen. She wished Mother would come. She wished Pixie were here to kiss her face with his rough little tongue. She wished she had a great plateful of ice-cream, but no, it was not ice-cream that she wanted. Janey didn't know what she did want, and she was just beginning to push the bed-clothes about and to feel unhappy, when the door opened and in came Miss Bates.

She held in her hands two great balls of worsted, one bright red and one white, two shining black knitting-needles, and a bulky package, which she untied and opened on the bed so that Janey might see.

"It is like snow," said Janey, fingering the soft white stuff.

“It is cotton batting,” Miss Bates told her. “I am going to make you a doll, a knitted boy doll, Janey, and stuff him with this cotton batting. And you shall watch me do it, if you like.”

Of course Janey liked. She sat up in bed, her sore thumb propped carefully in front of her, and watched Miss Bates’s fingers fly.

Little by little the dolly grew. Round little head, crowned by a scarlet cap; plump little body, clothed in a gay red-and-white striped suit; neat white stockings, finished off by sturdy red worsted boots.

“Would you like tassels on his boots, Janey?” asked Miss Bates, so covered with bits of white cotton that she looked as though she had been out in a snowstorm.

“Oh, I would love tassels,” answered Janey so fervently, that Miss Bates not only made tassels grow on the little boy’s boots, but caused one to sprout cheerfully out from the top of his cap, like a plump little cherry nodding on a stem.

“What is his name?” inquired Janey, leaning

forward to watch Miss Bates skillfully fasten the little boy's suit under one arm. "Has he a name, Miss Bates?"

"Peter," was Miss Bates's prompt reply. "His name is Peter."

"Is that all?" asked Janey. "Only Peter?"

"No," returned Miss Bates thoughtfully, "his name is Peter — Peter Peppermint."

"O — Oh!" And Janey gave a little crow of delight. "Because of his suit, isn't it? He is striped just like a peppermint candy stick. Is he nearly finished? I want to hold him, I do."

"Almost finished," said Miss Bates, peering into a little bag of buttons. "You must choose his eyes, Janey. Here are two black shoe-button eyes, here are two brown shoe-button eyes, and here are two blue glass beads that ought to do very nicely for eyes, I should think."

"Give him blue eyes," decided Janey, "because Elly has black ones, and I think the blue ones are pretty, too, with his red suit."

So in a twinkling, Peter Peppermint was

given a pair of blue eyes, a neat little red nose, and a wee smiling mouth. And the next moment he was placed in Janey's arms, who first hugged him close, and who next made him place both arms round Elly's decidedly plump neck and give him a friendly squeeze.

"They are brothers, I think," said Janey, "because they are both stuffed with cotton batting."

For a time the two cotton-battling brothers and Janey lay happily playing together in the bed.

But presently, Janey's thumb became more painful. She couldn't allow Mother to leave her for one moment. She couldn't eat the hot cream toast that Lucretia arranged so temptingly on Janey's favorite Japanese tray. She could scarcely smile at Miss Bates, who tiptoed noiselessly in and out of the room. She tossed and turned and tossed again, and all the while her thumb throbbed — beat, beat, beat — and would neither let her sleep nor lie still.

She could scarcely lift her head when Dr. Berry came in again. But she took the tea-spoonful of something cool that he gave her, and tried to smile up at him as she heard him say:

“This will make you feel better, Janey. Now go to sleep.”

“Where is Peter Peppermint?” whispered Janey.

Mother took Peter’s little worsted hand and clasped Janey’s well hand round it.

“Here he is, Janey, just beside you,” said Mother.

And then the strangest thing that ever happened to Janey happened right now!

CHAPTER X

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

YES, the strangest thing that ever happened to Janey happened right now.

For Peter Peppermint rose up and jumped out of bed, and he tugged at Janey's hand till she jumped out after him. Peter Peppermint — whom Janey had seen made only that morning out of two balls of worsted and a roll of cotton batting!

Lumbering off the bed after them came Elly. He rolled out of the room and down the hall, the very way all elephants walk, his gray flannel trunk swinging from side to side, and his shoe-button eyes gleaming as if he enjoyed the joke of it all.

Down the stairs and out upon the porch they went. Fortunately they met no one, for, if they had, Janey would have been sent straight back to bed, without any doubt.

At the foot of the steps lay Aunt Ellen's dog,

Molasses. He seemed to be expecting them, for he rose, wagging his tail, and the next moment Janey found herself riding down the front path, seated on Molasses' back. At her side rocked gray-flannel Elly, bearing his jaunty cotton-batting brother, Peter Peppermint.

"Whoop! We're off!" called Peter, waving his stubby arms in the air and rolling his merry blue eyes up at Janey's astonished face.

Janey wanted to ask where they were going, but she saw that the gate, just ahead, was closed, and not knowing whether Molasses meant to squeeze under the gate or to leap over it, she clutched his collar with both hands and held her breath.

Over the gate went Molasses, as lightly as a feather sailing through the air, and landed upon the ground without jarring Janey in the least. It was quite a pleasant experience, and Janey was sorry that Elly had not tried it as she watched him scramble under the gate, with Peter lying flat upon his back.

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“Whew!” said Peter, sitting up and straightening his cap with both hands. “That was a tight squeeze. How is my tassel? I hope it isn’t hurt. I like that tassel.”

And he anxiously fingered the little red cherry bobbing from the top of his cap.

“It isn’t hurt at all,” said Janey kindly. “It looks very well. But where are we going, Peter? Don’t you think you ought to tell me where we are going?”

“Over the other side of the hill,” answered Peter Peppermint, pointing to the steep hill over the river that Janey could see from her window. Only now it seemed much nearer, quite close at hand. “My relatives live over there, the Peppermint family. I thought we would go over and pay them a friendly call.”

Peter prodded Elly gently with the heel of his red worsted boot, and as the elephant moved forward, Molasses swung into place beside him.

Janey knew it was strange that she should be riding on a dog’s back, in company with a

worsted doll and a flannel elephant, bound over the hill to visit the Peppermint family, and yet, in a way, it seemed perfectly natural, too.

So she was really not surprised to see Humpty Dumpty lean forward on the wall and wave to them as they passed.

“Give my love to Mother Goose if you meet her,” called Humpty Dumpty.

And in a flash Janey remembered Mr. Banta, the postman, and how he had said those very words to her, once upon a time.

“I will,” called back Janey, “I will.”

She wanted to say to Humpty Dumpty, “Be careful. Don’t fall.”

But she was afraid of hurting his feelings, so she didn’t.

“Do you think we are apt to see Mother Goose?” asked Janey, as they rode along.

What fun it would be when she reached home again, home in the city, Janey meant, to tell Mr. Banta about a real meeting with Mother Goose.

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“Not knowing, can’t say,” was Peter Peppermint’s somewhat saucy reply.

But Janey decided that Peter was a trifling jealous when he added, “You will like my cousin, Polly Peppermint, much better than you would like Mother Goose, I know.”

So Janey asked no more questions, and made up her mind that she would not mention Mother Goose again unless they met her face to face.

Neither Molasses nor Elly could be called swift steeds. Molasses had never moved quickly in all his life — even as a puppy he had played in an indolent, leisurely fashion — and Elly now rolled slowly along as if under a tropic sun. But somehow the ground was covered. A moment ago they had been talking with Humpty Dumpty in front of Uncle John’s gate, and now they were well up the hill nearing the top.

On they went along the quiet country road, no one in sight. Then the top of the hill was reached, and as Janey looked down on the other

side she laughed aloud and clapped her hands in pleasure at what she saw.

For there lay spread out before her a village, a toy village it seemed, full of the gayest houses you can imagine, red, and yellow, and pink, and white. Along one street the houses were black, in another section a dark, rich brown. They were all so strange and yet so familiar, too. About the streets moved tiny figures, colored like the houses, and they were hurrying and bustling along on their errands, for all the world like the people Janey had left on the other side of the hill.

And if Janey was delighted at the sight, so was Peter Peppermint, too.

“Look!” shouted Peter, wildly waving his little worsted arms. “Look at those red-and-white houses! There is where my relatives, the Peppermints, live.”

The Peppermints! In red-and-white houses! Why, of course, Janey understood it all now.

“They are candy,” cried Janey. “The houses

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are made of candy. And I do believe the little people walking about are candies, too."

Yes, it was true. The village and the people in it were made of candy, every bit.

Peter had known this all along, you must remember, so he was not excited about it as Janey was. But he did want to show the village to Janey, so side by side they rode along, over the clear candy streets, past the sugary sidewalks, Peter pointing and explaining, and Janey, with wide-open eyes, listening and looking all the while.

"There are the Lemondrop houses," said Peter, stopping before a row of pale yellow cottages. "Lily Lemondrop is a great friend of my cousin, Polly Peppermint. And those black houses are where the Licorice people live. Lucy Licorice is in Polly's class at school, I believe. This large brown house is called the Chocolate Mansion. The Chocolates are among the best people in town. They built the church over there, the one with the clock in the tower."

Janey saw the tiny white candy clock high in the pointed brown tower.

The village seemed complete. There were tiny stores, and a candy schoolhouse, with a cocoanut flag waving above it. About the streets horses pranced, dogs ran, and automobiles rolled up and down, all made of red-and-white clear candy, such as you will find on Christmas trees. Janey recognized them at a glance. The streets were shaded by little green candy trees, and about each house there stretched a smooth green candy lawn.

It was as neat and trim a little village as you could hope to see, and up and down and in and out the streets went the candy people, all so intent upon their own affairs that they seemed scarcely to notice their visitors. At least they did not stare at Janey nearly so much as she stared at them.

But one stout little candy lady, a deep yellow in color and tastefully dressed in a costume of brown stripes, did stand still in the street to smile sweetly upon Peter Peppermint.

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“It is Aunt Molasses Peppermint,” cried Peter, springing from Elly’s back to the ground. “Oh, Aunt Molasses, how glad I am to see you! How are all the family? How is Polly?”

“Polly is well. She is in school just now,” replied Aunt Molasses, shaking hands with Janey in a cordial manner. “We are all well, thank you, except Grandpa Peppermint, and he feels his years. He is quite bowed over with age. There he goes now, down the street. You can see for yourself how he is.”

Aunt Molasses pointed to a peppermint candy cane, who hobbled stiffly up the steps of a red-and-white peppermint house and disappeared inside.

“Do you suppose, if we went to the school, we could see Polly?” asked Peter, after he had shaken his head properly over Grandpa Peppermint’s infirmities. “I would like my friend Janey to see Polly. I live with Janey now.” And Peter lifted his head proudly as if it were an honor to live with Janey.

“I think you could,” replied Aunt Molasses. “The children have a very sweet teacher now, Miss Lollipop.”

So bidding good-bye to Aunt Molasses, Janey and Peter set out for the school. Leaving Elly and Molasses in front of the building, they mounted the white sugar steps and rang the bell.

“Yes, indeed, they might come in,” the little messenger who opened the door told them.

The little messenger had a plump, shining face, and wore a pretty violet frock. Janey couldn’t think who she might be until later she heard one of the children call her Buttercup. Of course, a violet buttercup candy, and Janey had always been fond of buttercups, too.

Miss Lollipop, the teacher, came forward graciously to meet them. She was a pale young lady, with a rather large head and a tall slim body. She seated the visitors in the front of the room beside her desk and called Polly Peppermint from her seat.

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Janey liked Polly the moment she saw her. She was round and chubby, with bright red cheeks, and she wore a pretty little red-and-white striped dress, as crisp and fresh as could be. She was a friendly little creature, too, and, with Miss Lollipop's permission, she brought up all her special friends for Janey to meet.

“This is Lily Lemondrop,” said Polly, drawing forward a little girl with long light yellow curls. “And here is Caroline Caramel, my dearest friend.”

Caroline was a stocky little girl in a brown dress. She was bashful, too, and tried to hide behind two small pink-and-white cocoanut kisses, who stood smiling innocently up into Janey’s face.

Polly next brought up the Chocolate-Cream girls, Strawberry and Orange — family names, they said, if a little odd — and from a far corner she led by the hand a black, dumpy child, Lucy Licorice, agreeable, if plain, and with no reason that Janey could see for being so humble.

They were all pleasant companions. Janey liked them, every one, and she was sorry when Miss Lollipop clapped her hands together and told the children to take their seats.

"I want them to recite for you," said Miss Lollipop to Janey.

So up in a row across the front of the room stood the little girls.

"We will recite the poem we have been learning this past week," announced Miss Lollipop. "The title of the poem is 'What Are Little Girls Made Of?'"

The long row of little girls swayed to and fro. Then their voices rose in chorus:

"What are little girls made of?
What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice,
And everything nice.
That's what little girls are made of."

Janey and Peter Peppermint applauded loudly. Indeed, Janey clapped until her hands burned.

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Then, somewhat to her own surprise, she jumped to her feet.

“Now I will say the other half of the poem,” said Janey.

And before any one could stop her she recited in a loud voice:

“What are little boys made of?
What are little boys made of?
Snaps and snails,
And puppy-dogs’ tails.
That’s what little boys are made of.”

‘Would you believe it, no one liked it at all?’

Miss Lollipop’s face grew very long; Peter Peppermint looked as sober as could be; while the little girls scowled and frowned and even seemed downright angry.

Then, Caroline Caramel, shy no longer, called out: “That is not so. My brother Claudio Caramel is not made of snaps and snails.”

“Neither is my brother Laurence,” declared Lucy Licorice, far from humble, quite bold in fact.

“Nor Billy Buttercup,” whimpered the shining little violet messenger. “He is just as sweet as anybody else.”

“You are not very polite to my Cousin Peter,” called out Polly Peppermint, her face all red and hot.

They pressed nearer and nearer, their faces grew more and more angry, and Janey had really begun to be afraid of them, when suddenly she thought of something that made her stand up very tall, indeed.

“Why, if I wanted to, I could eat you all,” called Janey.

And, snatching up Peter Peppermint and tucking him under her arm, Janey ran out of the room as fast as she could go.

In front of the school stood Elly, alone. Molasses had disappeared. Had he, too, been provoked at the mention of puppy-dogs’ tails?

Janey hastily mounted faithful Elly’s back, and, in a rolling, swaying gait that she found most soothing, Elly bore her home.

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She didn't remember climbing back into bed. The next thing she knew, she opened her eyes to look into Mother's face, bending above her.

"My thumb," said Janey, faintly.

She lifted her hand. She waited a moment.

Then Janey cried out joyfully, "My thumb is well. My thumb is well. The pain is gone. Now let me tell you where I went last night, Mother. And guess who went with me? Peter Pepper-mint!"

CHAPTER XI

LOST — PETER PEPPERMINT

PETER PEPPERMINT was lost. Janey had hunted for him high and low, and he was not to be found anywhere.

“Try to remember where you played with him last,” said Mother.

So Janey, twisting the edge of her dress in her effort to think, went over all the places where she and Peter had been together not so very long ago.

“We played that Uncle John’s big chair in the library was a ship,” said Janey, “and I know we went up in the garret to hunt for Pixie. And I remember shutting Peter up in your closet because he was saucy, but I know I took him out again. I didn’t leave him there more than a minute. I felt sorry for him all alone in the dark. Maybe if you helped me look, Mother, we could find him.”

So Mother helped Janey look, in the closet,

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under the bed, even in Mother's "piece-bag," for Peter was so soft and small that he could be tucked away in the most unlikely spots.

"Perhaps Jacky has taken him," suggested Janey.

So all Jacky's little belongings were turned inside out, in the hope that Peter might come to light, but still the red-and-white worsted dolly was not to be found.

"He was so pretty," mourned Janey. "I loved him so. He had such a cunning little pinch-up mouth, and his eyes were so blue and bright, and he was so soft to hold."

So Uncle John took pity on Janey and helped her in her search. He took the cushions out of his big chair where Peter and Janey had played "ship." No Peter. He opened the doors of the wide cupboard under his secretary.

"You may have put Peter to bed in here," said he.

But no, Peter was not there.

Then Uncle John took his hat and his stick,

and he and Janey walked about the garden together, in the hope that Peter might be found lying under a bush, or sitting in a flower bed, or hiding behind a tree.

But, after the most careful search, Uncle John and Janey agreed that Peter was not in the garden.

“I wish Humpty Dumpty would tell me where he is,” said Janey, looking up into Humpty Dumpty’s cheerful face. “I do really believe he knows.”

Humpty Dumpty looked straight over Janey’s head at the buckwheat field across the road; he simply would not look her in the eye, and that was all the satisfaction Janey had from Humpty Dumpty.

Then Mattie Perks took a hand in the search for the missing dolly. Mattie Perks was known to be a “good looker,” and it was true that her sharp black eyes allowed very little to escape their glance. But although Mattie peered and pried to her heart’s content, and delved into

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many a corner hitherto barred, she, too, was unable to find Peter Peppermint.

“He isn’t in this house. That I know,” announced Mattie, quite crestfallen at her failure. She had been so sure that she would be successful. “I believe you left him down in the meadow where Burris was cutting the grass.”

That was an idea to be followed up. Janey didn’t want to go down in the meadow alone, so Uncle John put aside his newspaper and went with her.

Hand in hand they paced about the meadow, scanning every clump of innocent daisies or bed of fragrant clover in the hope that a glimpse of scarlet and white might be their reward. But the only scarlet and white they saw was that of the blushing clover and snowy daisies, and at last even Janey was ready to give up and go home.

“Perhaps I did drop him here, and a big bird has picked him up and carried him off to his nest,” suggested Janey, with a look of distress on her round little face.

“Not likely,” said Uncle John, “not likely at all.”

“Perhaps a rabbit has taken him down into his hole, or a dog has thrown him into the river,” went on Janey, voicing all the most painful thoughts that were in her mind.

But Uncle John shook his head most decidedly at these ideas.

“I doubt very much that you lost him out here in the meadow,” said he. “I think you will find him at home, tucked away on a shelf or in a bureau drawer, and laughing in his sleeve at the trouble he is giving us.”

This was such a comforting thought that Janey told it to Mother as soon as she reached home.

Mother put down her book to listen, and, after thinking it over a moment as Janey asked, was inclined to agree with Uncle John.

“Peter will come to light some day,” said Mother, “I am sure.”

And it was on the very next day that Mother

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was proved to be right, not at all to Janey's surprise, however, for in Janey's opinion, Mother could do or say nothing wrong.

It was in the morning, out in the garden, and Mother was cutting flowers. Two great baskets, already filled to the brim, stood on the walk. There were roses, pink and white and palest yellow. There were fragrant mignonette and nodding canterbury bells, sweet peas, dainty and fragile, and bold orange and scarlet nasturtiums, that flaunted themselves along the wall where Humpty Dumpty sat. And last of all, from the very foot of the garden, Mother cut a great armful of hollyhocks, purple and lavender and deep rich rose.

Janey followed Mother into the house, and watched her separate and arrange the flowers in bowls and vases of different sizes and shapes.

"Now I must have a tall jar for the hollyhocks," said Mother. And together she and Janey walked about looking for a vase that would hold the high, stiff stalks.

In the library Mother stood still before Uncle John's secretary. On the top, far out of reach, was a tall copper jar.

"That ought to be just the thing," said Mother.

So, standing upon a chair, she lifted down the brightly burnished pot.

Just by chance Mother looked inside—oh, suppose she had poured the water in without looking!—and a strange expression came over her face.

"Janey," said Mother quietly, "look here."

Inside the jar, face down, lay Peter Pepper-mint!

How had he come there? Who had put him in the jar?

Not Janey, nor Jacky, for they never could have reached so high. Not Mattie Perks, nor Uncle John, nor Mother, nor Lucretia, for had not Mother and Uncle John and Mattie Perks hunted their best for Peter? And as for Lucretia, Janey ran out at once to the kitchen with

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the somewhat dusty Peter in her arms, and Lucretia was as astonished at the discovery and as pleased as Janey herself.

But it was Lucretia who found out who had tucked Peter away in such a snug hiding-place. For Lucretia thought and thought, and then she began to chuckle and laugh to herself. And when old Burris, weeding the vegetable garden, came in for a drink, Lucretia, holding Peter hidden behind her back, asked him a question.

“Burris,” said Lucretia, “when you cleaned the brasses the other day, do you remember cleaning a tall copper jar that I left out for you on the library table?”

Yes, Burris thought he did remember the tall copper jar.

“Do you remember putting anything inside the jar when you set it back on top of Mr. John’s secretary?” went on Lucretia, beginning to laugh again.

No, Burris couldn’t say that he did remember putting anything inside the copper jar.

“Look at this,” said Lucretia, suddenly producing Peter. “Don’t you remember putting this doll baby in the jar when you set it back in place?”

Burris stared at Peter for a moment and Peter stared back, his blue eyes as jolly and friendly as if Burris had had nothing to do with his being shut away in a little prison, as it were, for four days and nights.

Then a grin spread over Burris’ face and he slowly rubbed his head.

“Yes,” nodded Burris, a trifle sheepishly, “I did drop him in the jar. I thought he belonged there.”

“Here, Janey,” said Lucretia, handing Peter over to Janey, who had listened to this conversation with round and interested eyes. “I suppose you left Peter lying on the table and Burris thought he lived in the jar.

“Well, I can tell you, Burris, that this house has been upside down for almost a week, looking for that doll, and Janey feeling as badly as if she had lost a brother.”

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“No,” said Burris, looking sorry, though he was smiling, too. “No. Well, that is too bad.”

He fumbled in his pocket and brought out a tiny basket, carved from a peach pit, which he put into Janey’s hand.

“I make them for my little granddaughter,” said Burris. “She likes them.”

And Janey liked it, too.

“I will keep it for Peter,” said Janey, “and sometimes he may wear it on a ribbon or a string. But I will wear it myself, to-day, for fear Peter is lost again, and then I wouldn’t have either Peter or the peach basket,” said wise little Janey.

CHAPTER XII

THE HAPPIEST DAY

JANEY opened her eyes and sat up in bed with a jerk.

Yes, the sun was shining, the sky was blue. It was a clear day.

Pixie, from the foot of the bed, came creeping up into Janey's lap.

"Pixie," said Janey, holding the little kitten up until their noses almost touched, "Pixie, do you know what day this is? This is the very happiest day of all. Father is coming home to-day, Pixie. He will be here in time for dinner to-night."

Janey hugged Pixie close as she said these delightful words. Then out of bed she scrambled to see whether Mother and Uncle John were awake, for she knew what a busy day this was to be and felt it only right that they all should have an early start.

Janey herself spent the morning with her

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basketful of dolls, washing and dressing them in their best, and telling them all she could of Father, whom they had never seen.

“Or if you did see him, he was only a little boy,” Janey told them, “and not nearly so nice as now that he is Father.”

She arranged the dolls in a long row before her and went straight down the line, with a word of praise for one or a bit of finery to adorn another, until she had done her duty by them all. Janey was a good mother, and now knew every doll by name and disposition quite as well as her own mother did.

“Josie Anna, you are to have a new ribbon for your neck,” ended Janey, “and perhaps, if I tie it very tight, it will help hold your head up straight. And come, Sadie, let me comb out your braids so that your hair will be all of a fluff. Now, children, I think you are ready. And remember, if you behave well no one will notice how you look. Mother often tells me that, so it must be true.”

The dollies glanced meekly up at their mother as she surveyed them for the last time. They looked well, Janey thought, especially little traveler Solly, who wore a bright purple cape that contrasted finely with his own black skin and the gray hide of the elephant he rode upon.

“Now,” said Janey, talking aloud just to be sociable, “I must sew the bell on Elly’s neck, and then I can go out in the kitchen and see what Lucretia is doing.”

The little tinkling bell, that Janey now fastened securely on Elly’s plump neck, had really been meant for Pixie’s wear. But Pixie would have nothing to do with a bell. A ribbon he would wear, provided it was fastened on his neck where he couldn’t possibly reach it to pull it off. But a bell — no. He rolled about and clawed and fidgeted until Mother had pity on him and took it off. So the bell was given to Elly, and as Elly did not know it had formerly belonged to Pixie, his feelings were not hurt in the least.]

In the kitchen Janey found Lucretia stepping round so briskly that she judged it discreet to keep out of Lucretia's path. So from a quiet corner she watched what went on, and presently learned all that she wanted to know.

Ice-cream? Yes. Burris was chopping the ice. Probably peach ice-cream, too. Cake? Certainly, with icing and full of nuts. Janey herself saw them poured into the cake batter.

Janey slipped out of the kitchen now that the important part of the dinner was settled to her satisfaction. Meat and vegetables and the rest Janey would leave to the grown folk.

Later in the day Uncle John and Mother drove off to meet Father at the train. It was to be a long drive, too long for Janey, Mother thought, to a far distant station, not Hebron station where Uncle John had met Mother and Janey and Jacky almost three months ago.

Janey did want to go with them. The tears would come into her eyes as she saw Mother putting on her hat.

“You won’t cry the day Father is coming home, will you, Janey?” asked Mother.

And Janey, shaking her head, bravely winked the tears away, while something Uncle John whispered in her ear helped her to send Mother a smile, quite a bright one, too, from the doorstep, as the car drove off.

The afternoon, alone with Mattie Perks and Jacky, seemed a trifle long. It was a responsibility, too, to keep her dress, though covered with a pinafore, fresh and clean so long.

But at last dusk fell, and the time drew near when they might begin to watch for Father.

Janey and Mattie Perks, with Jacky in his carriage, were out upon the porch. Every now and then Lucretia would come to the doorway and peer up the road.

By and by, Janey slipped away. Mattie Perks, peering round, discovered her standing on a chair in the hall, apparently looking at the wall.

“What-ever are you doing in the hall?” cried

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Mattie Perks. "Come out on the porch and watch."

But Janey shook her head slowly from side to side.

"It's a secret," said Janey — "Uncle John's and mine."

It grew darker and darker, but presently there was the sound of wheels, and then, sharp and clear, three blasts of an automobile horn.

And, at that very moment, Janey pushed the electric button before which she had been so patiently standing, and which lighted Humpty Dumpty on the wall.

"There!" cried Janey, scrambling down from the chair and running out upon the porch. "That was the secret. I was to light Humpty Dumpty for Father when Uncle John blew the horn."

Up the drive whirled the car, and the next moment Janey was in Father's arms.

Oh, how good it was to have him home again! Janey didn't believe she could ever stop hug-

ging him. But at last she did, and what do you think was the first thing she said?

“There, now,” said Janey, “I forgot to take off my apron.”

But Father didn’t care about the apron, not a bit. He held Janey on one knee and Jacky on the other, and they talked and talked and talked. That is, Father and Janey talked. Jacky didn’t say much but “Ah!” and “Goo!” and “M-m-m!” but Father liked to hear him say even that.

“Did you see Santa Claus?” asked Janey, when she had told Father every single thing that had happened all summer.

“No,” said Father, “not a sign of him. I asked about his reindeer, and they told me he couldn’t spare one. But I have ever so many little reindeer, carved toy reindeer, in my trunk, for you and Jacky and Mattie Perks, too. And I have two fur suits, the kind of suits the little Eskimo children wear, just the thing for you and Jacky in a snowstorm.”

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Janey dropped her head on Father's shoulder and patted his cheek.

"Will you go away again?" asked Janey, very low.

"No," said Father firmly, "not for a long, long time."

"Because," said Janey, "the next time you go, I am going with you."

After dinner — and Father thought the peach ice-cream and the nut cake were the best he had ever eaten — Janey took Father down to see Humpty Dumpty upon the wall.

"I like all the new people here this summer," said Janey. "I like Dr. Berry, and Pixie, and Burris, and the three boys, and Mattie Perks. But best of all, Father, I think I like Humpty Dumpty."

"I am not surprised to hear it," said Father, smiling at cheerful Humpty Dumpty. "I like him myself."

"And I want to go home with you and Mother and Jacky," continued Janey, "but I wish I

could take Humpty Dumpty with me, too."

"You can come back and see him," suggested Father. "Think of him in the winter-time, Janey, sitting out here in the snow. How glad he would be to see you coming along, dressed in your new white fur suit."

"Would you be glad to see me, Humpty Dumpty?" asked Janey, looking up at the bright little figure. "Tell me, do."

But when Humpty Dumpty did not answer, Janey understood.

"It is because you are here, Father," explained Janey. "If you were not here, I know that Humpty Dumpty would say 'yes.' "

When, a few days later, Janey did go home with Father and Mother and Jacky, she stood up in the automobile and waved good-bye again and again to Humpty Dumpty in his place upon the wall.

"Good-bye, Humpty Dumpty, good-bye," called Janey.

And as she caught a very last glimpse of

140 Humpty Dumpty House

him, Janey says she saw him wave his hand.

“He waved good-bye to me,” cried Janey.
“I saw him. Humpty Dumpty waved his hand
good-bye.”

And since Janey is perfectly sure of it to this
day, perhaps he did.

THE END

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